

The #1 Computer Game Magazine

Computer Gaming World



AUGUST 1996
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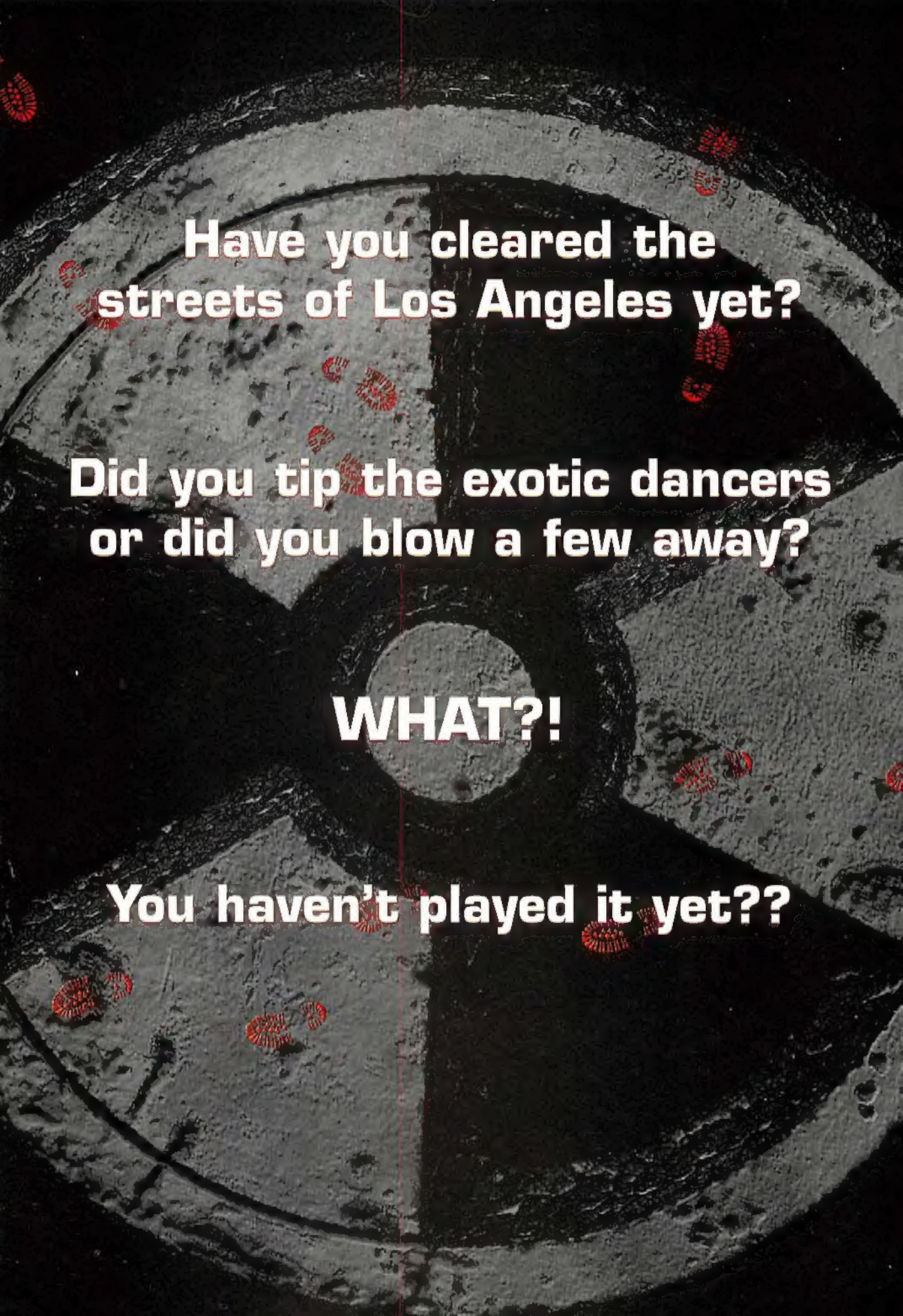
Star Trek
Deep Space 9
page 130

**The Best New
Games
Coming
For
Fall**

**100+
New
Games**

**Plus:
In-depth
Reviews**

- ▶ Strife
- ▶ TacOps
- ▶ Assault Rigs
- ▶ Zork Nemesis
- ▶ Total Mayhem
- ▶ Gateway Destination
- ▶ Battleground: Waterloo



**Have you cleared the
streets of Los Angeles yet?**

**Did you tip the exotic dancers
or did you blow a few away?**

WHAT?!

You haven't played it yet??

WHY IS DUKE NUKEM 3D THE BEST?

Even running in super crisp 800x600 SVGA it blasts along faster than every other comparable 3D PC title. It's not pure speed at the expense of versatility either - it is possible to look up, down, or sideways at any time, with the bitmapped scenery undergoing minimal deformation and no speed loss whatsoever. The engine also caters for full interaction, so bullets leave pock marks on walls, enemy's blood drips down crates and earthquakes cause

huge sections to shift altogether, thereby granting access to new locations. It all contributes to the feeling of being encased within a grim world as opposed to wandering through impregnable, static corridors. The effect is hugely rewarding and is surely the direction in which such games should be heading.

This potential has luckily been exploited too. So often games fail to capitalize on excellent technologies but each of **Duke Nukem's** levels are noticeably different, being packed with huge ramps, drops, lifts, jumps and cunningly hidden secret areas. None look the same (indeed there is often a significant variation within a single building) and there is always a feeling that there is a new trick round the next corner. — *Edge Magazine*



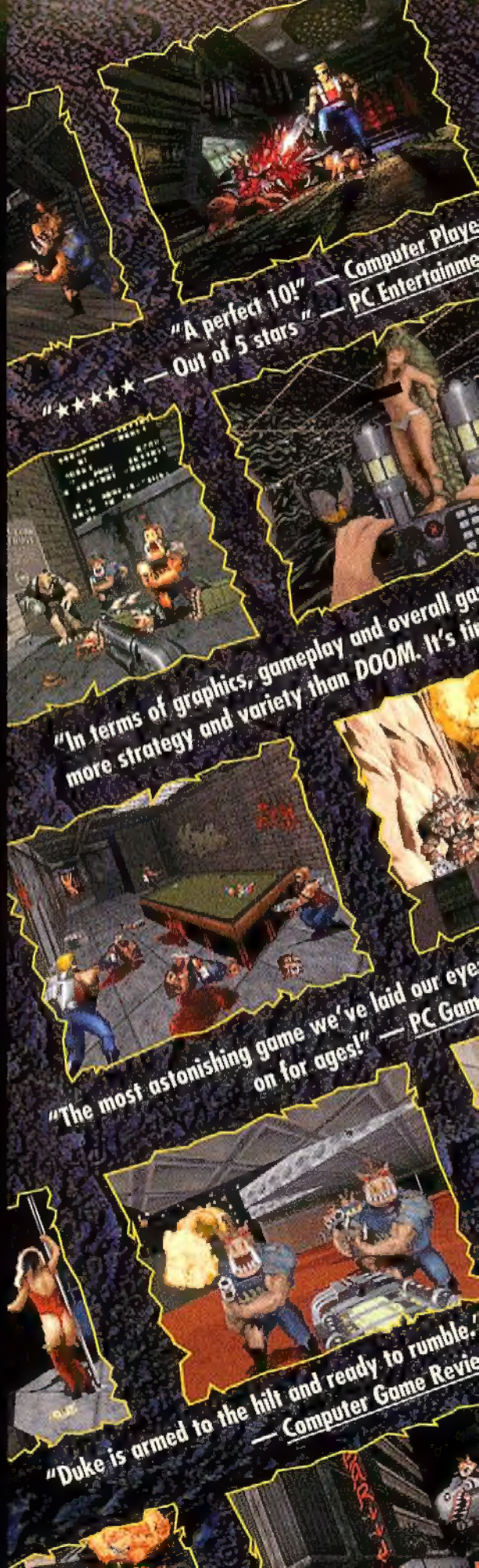
DUKE NUKEMTM 3D



CIS (GO REALMS) • WorldWideWeb (<http://www.3drealms.com>) • AOL (Keyword 3D REALMS)

Mature Players: Violence and Adult themes

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Well, what are you waiting for?

...e design, Duke is better than DOOM. The modem/network play is far better and allows
...e to make way for the Duke." — Computer Player

WINNER OF
"GAME OF SHOW"



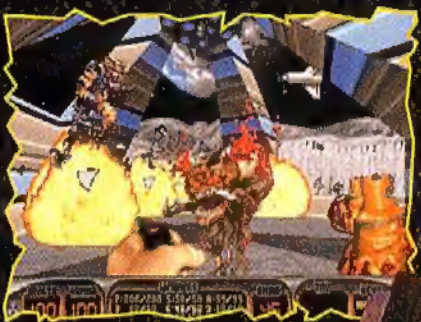
"Duke Nukem 3D truly looks like a 3D supermodel of a game: sleek, sexy,
and gory with lead-thrashing action." — Strategy Plus

"The BFG was a pop-gun, (it's) got nothing on the sophisticated hi-tech weaponry
at Duke Nukem's disposal." — Computer Gaming World

"DOOM is DEAD — long live Duke Nukem 3D,
could this be the greatest PC shoot'em-up ever?" — X-GEN



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3D



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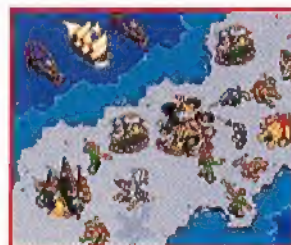
#1 Selling PC Game, Jan-April 1996 PC Data Report • **Game of the Year**, PC Gamer • **Multiplayer Game of the Year**, PC Gamer • **Golden Triad Award**, Computer Game Review • **Game of the Year**, Computer Gaming World Readers' Choice • **Best On-line Game**, C/NET



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Computer Gaming World

FEATURES

47 Cover Story: Big Game Hunt

Strap on your pith helmet and hop in the CGW

Jeep as we track down the hottest new games on the plain. In this 24-page feature, we focus in on the best new titles in each category, plus online games, hardware and peripherals. If you've heard the far-off drumbeat, and it stirred the primal hunter in your soul, then polish off that pitcher of G&T's, sahib, and go bag some trophies.

100+ New Games

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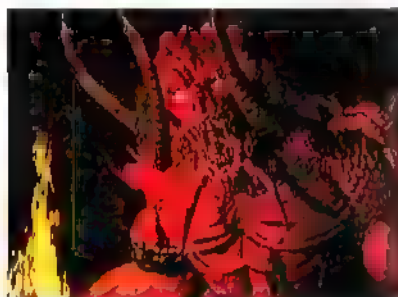
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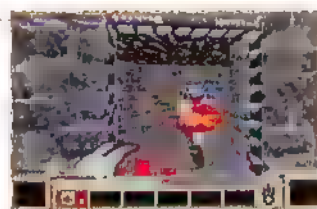


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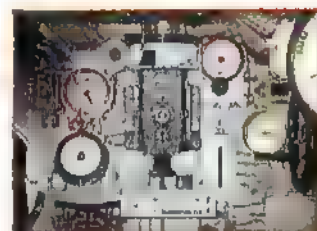
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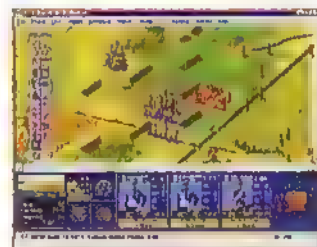
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TO GET THE JOB DONE.**

**AND ANDERSON,
THERE COULD BE A MEDAL
IN IT FOR YA.**



Anderson, Chuck. Sergeant. Leads 2nd Platoon's Recon team. Probably gotta wife back home. Damn good soldier. You give him an order and he figures out the best way to get the job done. So what's he doing cowering behind that bombed-out farmhouse?

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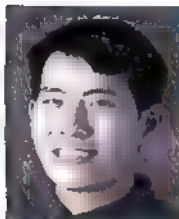
Microsoft

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO TODAY?

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Elliott "Gunboy" Chin is the editor responsible for the Action and Strategy sections in *CGW*. A huge fan of *Civ*, *Civ II*, *WARCRAFT II*, and side scrolling fighting games, his latest obsession is spanking his colleagues in *QUAKE* DeathMatches. Gunboy is also an RPG

fanatic, and has been playing *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* for over ten years. Never a great CRPG fan, he has recently been lured to desktop role playing by the sweet alpha of Blizzard's *DIABLO*. Now he's crawling through diabolical dungeons, fragging space soldiers and commanding lovable, destructive Orcs. He definitely loves his job.



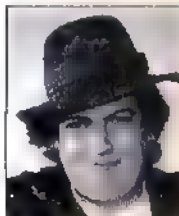
Charles Ardai, the online and print Contributing Editor for Interactive Fiction, is affectionately known at *CGW* headquarters as, "a good read." Often controversial and always enjoyable, Charles' ability to entertain while scrutinizing makes him one of our most heavily relied upon, and greatly anticipated authorities in

the computer gaming industry. He is a member of the Horror Writers Association, and has had his short stories published in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and other publications. But not all is work for the Master of Quip. For a good time he retreats to the respectable world of business and functions as the President of Juno, a free e-mail service located at <http://www.juno.com>.



Gordon Goble, a confessed sports junkie, is an aficionado of reflex testing simulations of all kinds. When he's not cruisin' the Net to get scoring updates for his hockey pool, Gordon is busy hot-wiring his Pentium to run the latest racing simulators and sports games. Formerly an agent for a professional auto racing

team, he now runs his own one-man desktop publishing business in Vancouver, B.C. He got hooked on computer racing with *INDIANAPOLIS 500* and since then has continued a relentless pursuit of authentically over the top in his pursuit of the ultimate digital sports experience. If it weren't for Papyrus, Electronic Arts and MicroProse, he would probably be spending a lot of his free time at the tennis courts or gym.



Martin Cirulis is, by his own admission, "a grumpy old gamer," who also hails from the Great White North in Vancouver, B.C., and has recently joined the Pentium Class of computer gaming. For several years he has been a regular contributor of game reviews for *CGW*, and last

year, began writing the popular, "What's the Deal With..." editorial column. In the distant past, he was indoctrinated in the arcane computing arts but has turned his back on them in the name of Science Fiction literature, which he tries to write when he isn't knee-deep in games to review or the daily duties of being a husband and father.



Jack Rodrigues is a stealth weapon in the *CGW* arsenal. A talented graphic artist with a knack for seamlessly grafting heads onto disparate bodies (e.g., Elvira), Jack is a hard-core gamer who traces his roots to text adventures on the Apple II. He got hooked on flight sims with Sid Meier's *HELLCAT ACE*, which led him to *FLIGHT SIMULATOR*, *F 15 STRIKE EAGLE*, *GUNSHIP* and *FALCON*. His interest in fixed wing and rotary flight sims comes as no surprise, since he served as a crew chief on CH-46 Sea Knight

troop helicopters in the Marine Corps. Accordingly, he's logged lots of hours with *APACHE LONGBOW*, but he's also playing *TERRA NOVA*, *STONEKEEP* and *QUAKE*, while eagerly awaiting *FIGHTING FALCONS: BACK TO BAGHDAD*, *DIABLO* and *RETURN TO KRONOR* (whew!). Both hardware- and software-literate, Jack spends the remainder of his off-hours scouring news-groups and posting messages about technology and gaming. Trouble is, the guy's so knowledgeable he can argue any side of an issue, and often does, which can turn even an off-hand remark into a marathon debate. But that's what makes him a *CGW* kind of guy.

CG 145

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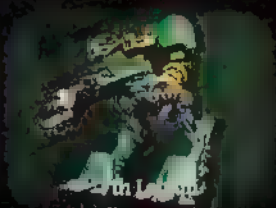
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What's on the business end of my laser this month? What kind of a bent system do you rate games with? What do

you think you are, journalists? Why did you say one of your editors was, "She Who Must Be Obeyed"?



What's On The CD?

Follow our safari guides as they take you into the bush to hunt Big Games. In this month's CG-ROM, we feature a behind-the-scenes look at upcoming targets from LucasArts, Westwood Studios, SSI, Electronic Arts, Legend Entertainment, MicroProse, Microsoft and many more. Our artists and editors take the best features of multi-media and bastardize them to tell you what's hot and what's hype.

Then, light a candle and settle back in your tent for this month's game demos. You'll find Spectrum

HoloByte's user friendly Top Gun: Fire at Will, Kismet's online, multiplayer air combat game, Air Warrior 2, Domark's Crusader knock-off, Total Mayhem, and Mindscape's action-packed Megarace 2. For a more calculating experience, try Blue Byte's sequel to the strategy game Serf City, The Settlers 2.

And now, a message from the doctor: if games with SVGA graphics leave you cross-eyed, the prescription might just be Display Doctor 5.2. The latest version of SciTech's popular Universal VESA driver is available here in shareware

form (exclusive for our disc). Or maybe your problem is less technical than gameplay-oriented. If so, Jason Strautman has graciously donated a few rounds of his Universal Hint System to free you from the snare.



How Do I Use It?

Our CD is a Windows program. If you have Windows 95, installation is simple: the CD is Autoplay enabled. Just "Lock 'n' load." Otherwise, from Windows 3.x, pop the CD into your drive, select RUN from the Program Manager's menu and type D:\RUN-ME (where D is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) to run it straight from the CD. Then type D:\INSTALL to create a CGW program group on your Windows desktop. If you have installed previous versions of the CG-ROM, this disk will use the program group already on your desk-

top. Point and click to navigate around the CD, just as you would in any other Windows program. You can access any of the regular items (such as Product Demos or Patches) by simply clicking on its corresponding button. Within the feature, you may skip to the next

game within any genre by clicking once on the "Next" button, or exit the feature entirely by clicking on the "Back" button twice.

How Do I Play The Demos?

To view the demos, first click on EDITORS' HOT PICKS or PRODUCT DEMOS button. Next, click on your favorite genre: Action, Adventure, Classic, Strategy, Wargames, or Music then click on the title of your interest. Each demo has instructions for its installation.

How Do I Get The Patch Files?

Click on PATCHES under the CGW FEATURES and then read the text window with instructions on copying the files to your hard drive. You also may access the patches from your DOS prompt by typing D:\PATCHES (where D is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) and copy them directly from there to your hard drive. We strongly recommend that you back up any previously saved games before installing a patch as this may write over your existing program.

How Do I Get The CG-ROM?

Newsstand issues come in two varieties: some with and some without the CD. Each type is clearly marked. If you can't find the version you want in the store you frequent, encourage your retailer to carry it (or subscribe to ensure you get a CD every month). To subscribe, simply call 303 665-8930, and specify that you want the CD-ROM version.

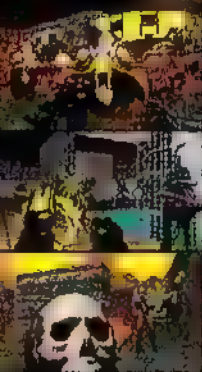


LAB MONKEYS

choose to stimulate their pleasure centers at the exclusion of food, water, sleep, and sex.

They're monkeys.

WHAT'S YOUR EXCUSE?



BUNGIE introduces *Marathon 2: Durandal*, the highly addictive game for Windows 95 that will leave you poor, hungry, naked, and cold. Within the ruins of an ancient civilization, you'll uncover long-buried secrets of a lost clan and use sophisticated weapons to battle nasty aliens. Take pleasure in 28 game levels that will churn your brain into foamy gray froth. The SVGA 3-D graphics and active stereo imaging don't suck either. And 18 levels of intense network play may cause you to wet yourself. Not that you'll care, monkey boy. **MARATHON 2: DURANDAL. NOW WILL IT RUIN YOUR LIFE?**

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MARATHON 2

DURANDAL

Circle Reader Service #75

How Do We Classify Games?

Action/Arcade (AC): The emphasis is on hand-eye coordination and reflexes, usually emphasizing fast play over story or strategy.

Adventure (AD): Games where in you control an alter ego and move through a storyline or sequence of events, where puzzle-solving takes precedence over conversation and combat.

Classics/Puzzles (CP): Classics are old stand-bys and parlor games that appeal to many different types of gamer. Examples include: backgammon, bridge, chess, MONOPOLY, parchesi, Risk, and SOLITAIRE. Puzzle games are computer games which emphasize spatial relationships, word games and/or problem-solving without requiring gamers to follow a storyline. Examples would be: SHANGHAI, TETRIS and ZIG-ZAG.

Role-Playing (RP): RPGs are a subset of adventure games, but stress character development, often through improving stats or other attributes. Conversations with non-player characters (NPCs) and tactical

combat are generally more important than in Adventure games. Finally, the game world tends to be large, and the plot less linear, often with some quests/treks outside the main storyline.

Simulations (SI): Highly realistic games from a first-person perspective, you may drive a realistically simulated race car, fly a military aircraft with a meticulous physics model, or swoop through a detailed sci fi environment. Usually polygon-filled technology is used to build the simulated world on the fly.

Sports (SP): The sports game category is a broad genre which includes action (NBA Live) and strategy games (FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL Pro) based on sports.

Strategy (ST): Problem-solving, short and long range planning are the keys here. These games almost always emphasize resource and risk management. This genre includes conflict-based sci fi and fantasy games (X-COM, Outpost, MOO), as well as "pure" strategy games and "software toys" such as SimCity.

Wargames (WG): A subset of

strategy games, these recreate historical conflicts from a command perspective. They may be tactical, operational, or strategic, and stress anything from logistics and firepower to morale and leadership. They may be simple (PANZER GENERAL, EMPIRE II) to incredibly detailed and complex (PACIFIC WAR).

What Is Your Reviews Policy?

1) We only review from the final copy of the game. Though it has become popular among PC gaming magazines to review from late beta copies, we feel that the reader is best served by having the reviewer look at the same copy of a game that the readers will find on the shelves. While we recognize that this causes some delay in coverage, we believe the reader is better served by such caution.

2) We expect our reviewers to finish the game. We want our readers to be assured that we do not review based on immediate or early impressions of a game. Our reviewers give a game ample opportunity to show its quality. In some cases, bugs make it impossible to finish a game, but we identify situations where that has occurred.

3) We make every effort to match the reviewer to the game. We take into consideration the preferences, background and possible biases of the reviewer and, where possible, we find people with actual life experience or special backgrounds that match a game. We believe this policy enhances both the credibility of the review and the enjoyment of gameplay when the real world and the game world are competently compared.

4) We do not accept free travel from software or hardware companies. We believe such gifts have a tacit assumption of coverage attached to them. We will only cover such events/launches as we believe will benefit our readers. ☺

HOW DO WE RATE?



Outstanding: The rare game that gets it all right. The graphics, sound, and gameplay come together to form a Transcendent Gaming Experience. Our strongest buying recommendation.



Very Good: A high-quality game that succeeds in many areas. May have minor problems, but is still worth your money, especially if you're interested in the subject matter or genre.



Average: A mixed bag. Can be a game that reaches for the stars, but falls short in several ways. Can also be a game that does what it does well, but lacks flair or originality.



Weak: A game with serious problems. Usually buggy, seriously lacking in play value, or just a poorly-conceived game design—you should think long and hard before buying it.



Abysmal: The rare game that gets it all wrong. This is reserved for those products so buggy, ill-conceived or valueless that you wonder why they were ever released in the first place.

The Beast Within™ Game of the Year

Computer Gaming World

AWARDS

1996 Game of the Year

Computer Gaming World

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PC Gamer

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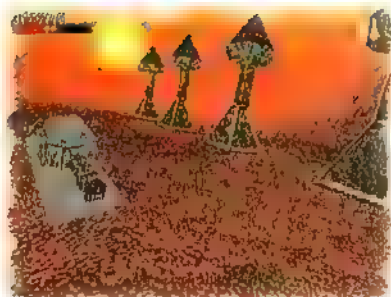


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"Stellar!"

— Next Generation, March 1996



The Future Of Gaming

Are Computer Games Here To Stay?



It's always dangerous to speculate on the future, especially when you're dealing with intelligent readers who tend to have long memories. Still, I have to address this subject, because lots of people, for whom I have the greatest respect, believe that the computer game industry is creatively dead. They believe that the MOTS (More Of The Same) themes of the latest Electronic Entertainment Exposition in Los Angeles loudly proclaimed the death knell for the industry. Of course, I have little to lose in addressing this subject. If I'm right, I won't be writing this column in the ten years or so when my visions might or might not come true. If I'm wrong, you'll have a hard time figuring out where to send the letter to the editor.

Frankly, I believe that the latest E3 show does sound a warning for the industry. The hottest games at the show seemed to be merely the games of a decade ago with better graphics and sound. New technologies are used to rehash old concepts rather than to explore new ones. That's not always bad, but it sure reduces the opportunities for fresh perspectives. After all, there are only so many tricks you can use to enhance on-screen blood and only so many camera

angles with which to view decapitation.

CONNECTION

Fortunately, I am an optimist. I still feel like computer games will permeate our lives in the future. Like Douglas Adams' supernatural private eye, Dirk Gently, I believe in the connectedness of all things. I particularly believe in the connectedness of all things electronic and I think they will bind us to each other in the future. I still expect to see the time where there will be multiple CPUs (of varying vintages and capabilities) in the home and they will all connect to the stereo, television, satellite dish, home appliances, and home security, as necessary. Essentially, home LANs connected to a cable modem which, in turn, connects them to the Web.

With the cable television connection, casual gamers will watch televised sports events as they watch live updates of their fantasy team records and compare their team side by side with their neighbors in a window on the television screen/monitor. Or, they could play a simulation of the game at the same time it is going on. As an added bonus, a smart search agent could go online, automatically find all of the televised highlights relating to their players, and give them their own highlights reel of their fantasy team every night

“ Shortly after 2005, interactive entertainment will reach parity with other entertainment forms in both prestige and revenue. ”

before bed time or every morning at breakfast

I also imagine gamers watching televised reviews of computer games or viewing interviews with game designers like Sid Meier, Chris Roberts or Lora British. With a touch of a button, they could order the game downloaded, join a multiplayer version of a game in progress, or send that smart search agent to find an online

opponent for them at a moment's notice. All would be done without interrupting the television picture because of the cable modem's superior bandwidth on the downlink.

VISION

I also envision 3D glasses as such an inexpensive VR peripheral that every family should be able to own several. Virtual I/O already offers lightweight glasses that are very close to my ideal. The resolution is getting better every year and I hope the price will, too. At current prices, they are a high-end peripheral for flight-sim fanatics and add considerably to the richness of the gaming experience. I loved flying EF2000 with them. Yet imagine flying the next generation EF2000 while wearing your VR glasses while you fly head-to-head against your son, daughter or friend while they wear their own VR glasses. It should be awesome.

SIMULACRON

I also think that the games of the future will rely upon synthetic actors. It is theoretically possible to

WWII Grand Strategy Game

THIRD REICH

PC



Are you a student of World War II history? Have you ever wondered how WWII would have developed if the Germans had captured Moscow, or invaded Britain? As the Allies, would you like to try to invade France *before* 1944? In this faithful adaptation of our popular board game, you command the armies, air forces and navies of one of the major powers during WWII. The game includes air, ground and sea forces of all the historical belligerents plus the forces of Spain and Turkey. Players are free to pursue many strategies -this is a perfect game to explore the many "what ifs" of WWII.

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film actors and actresses using all the phonemes and a variety of facial expressions. Next, a body double or stunt man or woman can tape all of the basic moves using motion capture technology. From the latter, animators can build a working 3D body model and use the former as a filmed texture map over the top of the model. In this way, program algorithms can direct synthetic actors to respond to any given situation as the gamer desires. So, every conceivable scene won't have to be filmed in

“Future gamers will wear goggles and thrust peripherals in the air while swashbuckling with villains and monsters.”

advance, but we can have interactive dramas on the low end and move realistic avatars through imaginary worlds on the high end.

Such potential allows for more advanced human interaction than violence and lets gamers establish virtual relationships. As in any art form, these relationships may be based in fictional worlds, based on non-existent situations, and involve imaginary characters, but they are a metaphor for life. They can teach us and sensitize us to new perspectives, cultures and ideals. That's an exciting potential.

PERIPHERALS

I'm also expecting to see more and more peripherals that will add to our gaming experiences. I know that experiments on 3D mice haven't gone very well, but I still think that the fantasy role-player of tomorrow will enjoy wearing goggles and thrusting his or her 3D mouse through the air while swashbuckling with villains and hacking monsters. We'll see more sports input/output devices to simulate bats, clubs, racquets and sticks. Flight sim fanatics won't be left out either. CH Products is already working on a forced-feedback joystick. Watch for other I/O devices to use forced feedback to simulate everything from racetrack physics to space shuttle controls.

FAST FORWARD

I firmly believe that, shortly after the year 2005, interactive entertainment will be reaching parity with other entertainment industries in terms of both prestige and revenue. Soon after, I believe it will surpass the maturing forms. I also believe that the new technologies upon which I've speculated will offer new opportunities to design computer games that are more than "shooters," more than "hack and slash." And, God willing, I think I'll still be covering it as the grand old man of *Computer Gaming World*.

Yes, there are times when I find myself getting frustrated at the immaturity of our medium and the lack of creativity that seems visible in today's products. But as I said in comparing the software industry with the film industry in a 1990 interview with *The San Francisco Examiner's Image* magazine, "We're in the early silents." As we enter this new era of connectivity, we might just have entered the period of the talkies. ☼

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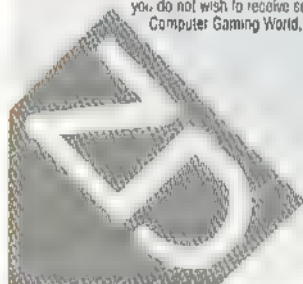
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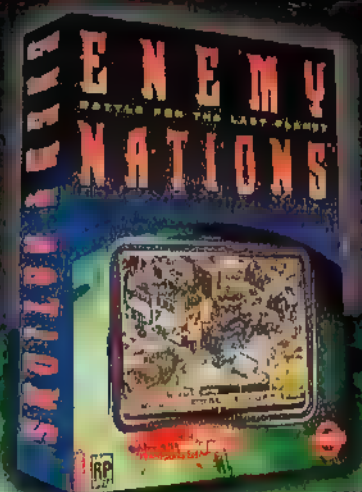
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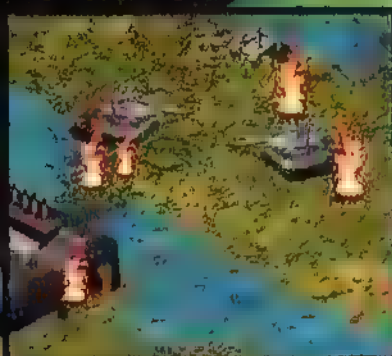
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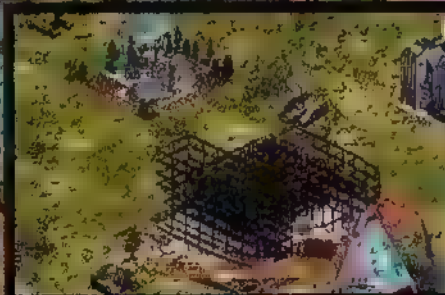
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THE THIN MAG

Why are CG magazines always thinner in summer and very thick (up to 400 pages) in winter months? And where is the line between Pentium and P6? (Starting at what

speed does it count as a P6?) Does Socket 7 really accept a P6-200? (Some vendors say it only goes to 150.)

Eric Lutz
Florence, SC

Computer Gaming World is always thinner in the summer because there are less games to write about in the summer. We put out magazines (huge issues) in the winter because most game companies publish the bulk of their products for the holiday season. As for the difference between a Pentium and a Pentium Pro (P6), it isn't merely a matter of speed. There are Pentium processors that run up to 200 Mhz and there are fast Pentium Pro processors in the same range. It's not the clock speed that makes a difference. Finally, as for upgrading to a P6 processor, DON'T DO IT! Until we reach the point of true 32-bit gaming, you'll actually be sabotaging your performance instead of enhancing it.

SOLUTION CONFUSION

CGW should have a section on solving CD-ROM games in its issues.

John Topper
Panorama City, CA

Actually, we have several sections. As the following letters observe, they are spread throughout the magazine. Look for CG Tips, Scorpio's Mail and some of our strategy articles.

I love the cheat codes and helpful hints. I find your staff opinions of newly released games very accurate.

Ron Ahrendt
Worth, IL

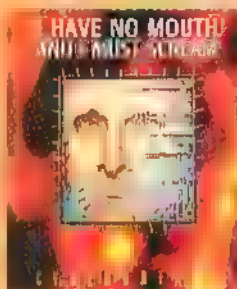
LETTER OF THE MONTH

DANGEROUS MISSIVE

With a bewildering admixture of pleasure and confusion—I'm like a meson what don't know which way to quark—I write to thank you, and your staff and whoever else is willing to take responsibility for naming my CD-ROM I HAVE NO MOUTH, AND I MUST SCREAM the CG Premier Award as Adventure Game of the Year for 1996.

Pleasure, because everybody likes to cop the ring as this loopy caravanserie chugs on through Time and Space. Confusion, because—as we both know—I'm an absolute amateur at

accolades in your presentation. But someone else who had as much, or more, to do with bringing this project to fruition, who was overlooked in your encomium, is David Mullich. He was the Project



Supervisor and designer after David Sears moved on. He worked endlessly, and with what Balzac called "clean hands and composure" to produce a property that would not shame either of us. It simply would not have won your award had not David

Mullich mounted the barricades.

I remember when I addressed the Computer Game Designers' banquet a couple of years ago, when I said I would work to the hilt of my ability on I HAVE NO MOUTH...but that it would be my one venture into the medium. Nothing has changed. I've been there, done that, and now you won't have to worry about me making a further pest of myself in your living room.

But for the honor you pay me, I am grateful. And bewildered.

Harlan Ellison
Sherman Oaks, CA

Harlan, that wasn't your physiognomy (Of course, in spite of Johnny Wilson's rather premature editorial drilling (He assumed you would blow off the project like many other novelists have ignored their intellectual properties, but now claims he really likes the taste of crow, thank you), you took the time to participate in the product design. You deserve the recognition for this and we thank you for both the interactive, as well as the linear, hours of entertainment with which you've provided us over the years.

THIS
SPEAKER
RATED
R

Harlan Ellison addresses the Computer Game Developers Conference in 1993, prior to the hostile CGW coverage of his speech.

this exercise. To find myself not only avoiding catcalls and justified laughter at my tyro efforts, but to be recognized with a nod of approval from a magazine that previously chewed a neat, small hole through the front of my face...well, it's bewildering.

David Sears and I worked very hard on I HAVE NO MOUTH. And we both get our

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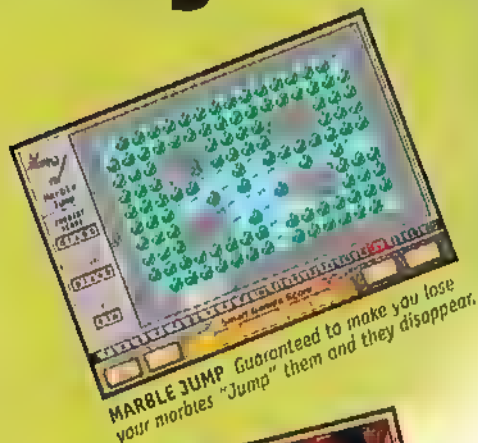
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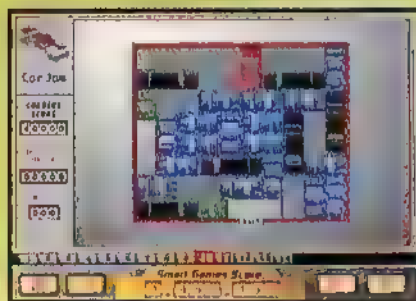
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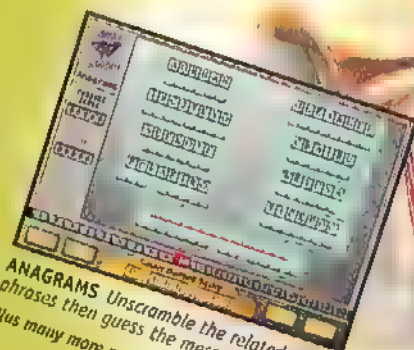
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I love CCW tips. I copy them all into a file for later times and I had out the order forms to all my friends. I tell them to get this mag. I love it. Thanks for a great information source.

Chris Schroeder
Corydon, IN

Productions, if he didn't think that game magazines were ruining the entire industry by raising expectations for new products at such early dates and contributing to the vaporware problem. Peter responded that he thought it would be more of a disservice to artificially constrain

WOE PLAYING

You know what I miss? I miss good role-playing games. Sure, the paper ones still have their magic, but I REALLY miss good RPGs on the computer. It seems to me that over the last couple of years, there has been a serious drought in this genre of game, and I, for one, am sick of it. The crap that they dish out now and try to pass as CRPGs is simply terrible. I could make a better one than those, and if I had the chance, I would. Another thing I miss in CRPGs is the 3/4 view. Most (if not all) computer RPGs are in first person, but I'm sorry, I want to see the character I am playing. Also, ALL of the CRPGs (I am probably exaggerating when I say all), say that the game is very different when played as the different character types, but in most cases, this just isn't true. Many games simply add some puzzles here and take out some there and put this sequence here instead of that one, as if that makes it a new adventure. I am more than certain that if CCW let some of their readers make designs for a game, (tell us how, what we will need and all that jazz) and then have you mail them to interested companies, better games would appear on the market.

And now for another complaint. Games today have become too easy, (at least for me). My average time on any game is 3-5 days. The only game to give me serious trouble was MIST, and that took me three weeks. I have tried in the past to tackle the problem, but most times I get the generic, "Sorry. Nothing we can do. I have a catalog," response from all (not an exaggeration) the companies I questioned about this. I called up and wrote to companies ranging from EA/Origin to Bullfrog to Sierra to Broderbund to Capcom, etc, etc. The closest I ever got was when I

actually got in touch with Al Lowe at Sierra, but even he was apathetic when I addressed him. Another popular excuse was "We are aiming for the mass market." I don't mean to offend anyone (yeah, I do!), but the mass market is a bunch of morons, half of who don't even know how to turn a computer on. Games are not designed for mass markets anyway; games are designed for a target audience. Avid DOOM fans aren't going to be immediately interested in something by Maxis (I would like to say one thing for Maxis, they actually seemed to care when I called them about this problem) and sim fans won't be quickly captured by DUCK NUKEM 3D. (I'm making generalizations, for I play all kinds of games, but most of my friends don't, so I guess I might be an exception.) The point is, that not only should games be made for a certain genre, but also for a particular degree of difficulty (I hats off to all games with adjustable difficulty settings.)

James R. Kempf
Boston, MA

Separated at Birth?



Cheers' comical Ted Danson and Dark Earth's homicidal Guardian of Fire.

DANSON IN THE DARK

Is it just me, or does the fellow on the cover of CCW #143 (June, 1996) look like Ted Danson of Cheers fame in a really bad mood?

JAL
Montgomery, PA

It's either just you or Ted found out what Woody Harrelson said about him at the end of Doc Hollywood. (Ed: The hue was, "That's not a star. That's Ted Danson.")

VAPORWARE PARTY

Vaporware. Vaporware has become more and more of a common occurrence. We just accept it as a fact of life. That's a bunch of bull! We give too much press to projects that are two years out. We have created a monster.

Tim Verpoorten
Plover, WI

At the European Computer Trade Show, a television journalist asked Peter Mohrweux, the Managing Director of Bullfrog

such information. Besides, he rather liked reading the magazines to see what the other companies were up to. The bottom line, he concluded, was that it was the publisher's responsibility to get the games out. He then apologized for delays on his own DUNGEON KEEPER, but assured viewers that it would be a much better game when it came out. We don't deliberately cover games that are two years out, but when you're dealing with potential breakthrough games like STONKTOP, BATTLECRUISER 3000 AD and THE ELDER SCROLLS: DAGONFALL, the best laid plans of designers and programmers oft go astray. (Ed: We know it reads "...of mice and men oft gang a-gley" in the original, but we didn't want you to go "Huh? Why are they paraphrasing Robert Burns to answer a letter about vaporware?") Gamers want to know what's happening out there and, though the wait may be frustrating, it's better to know what's coming than to wait in the dark.

In our July 3D graphics hardware features table, we incorrectly stated that the 3dfx didn't support trilinear filtering. The company's spec sheet indicated it didn't support "trilinear interpolation," because, as it turns out, that term is patented. Instead, the chip supports "advanced interpolation techniques," which is essentially the same thing. Also, their spec sheet referred to "lighting effects," but didn't mention support for source lights (rather than lit textures, a cheaper method of simulating lighting). Turns out they support source lights as well. We regret any inconvenience these errors may have caused.

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—Strategy Plus

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—Trent Ward, PC Gamer



Actual BM screens shown



Bad dog,
don't cast
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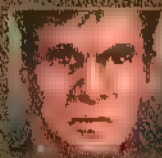
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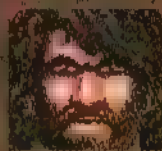


FUN



POSTIE

A disgruntled civil servant, Jack Postie got out of the Post Office just before he flipped out. With the help of his therapist and a strong union, Postie joined the AIM, allowing him to vent his frustrations and earn some serious cash doing so.

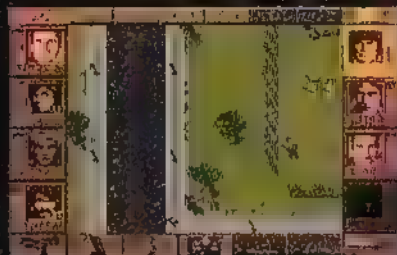


NAILS

Edgar Smorth was the leader of the largest biker gang on the continent. He's as tough as you guessed it, nails and he's wanted in just about every country with law. A word of warning - don't mess with the vest!

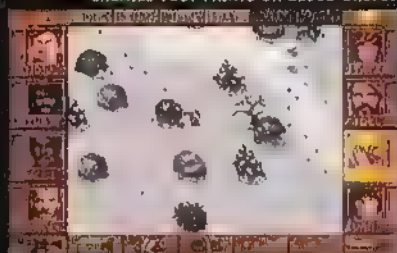
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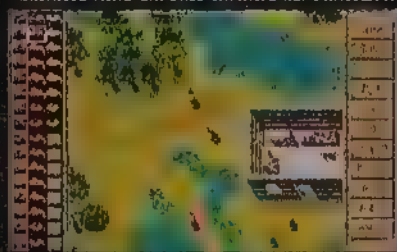
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Circle Reader Service #182

New Sony PC Highlights PC Expo

Toshiba, Panasonic Unveil New DVD CD-ROM Drives

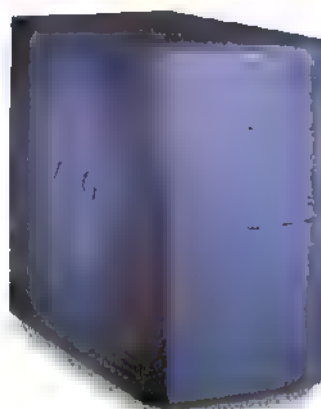
P

PC Expo isn't a game show. Access Software, showing near-final

versions of *Links LS* and *The Pandora Directive*, was the only game software developer we saw on the floor when we visited the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York on June 19. Despite the fact that PC Expo is the "anti-E3" (Electronic Entertainment Expo), the show's hardware emphasis meant that there were a number of products of interest to the gamer.

The attention-getter at the show was the new *PC by Sony* line, notable as much for what it doesn't do as for what it does. The Sony VAIO PCV-70 and PCV-90 aren't Gateway Destination competitors or "consumer appliance" PCs. They don't bring anything new to the technology party, but they do tie together leading-edge PC technology with some of the best design work and user comfort features we've seen yet.

The initial line will sport 166- and 200-MHz Pentium processors, 16 to 32MB of RAM, an ATI 3D Rage video chip with 2MB of video RAM, an 8x CD-ROM, a 28.8kbps Digital Simultaneous Voice and Data modem with speaker-phone fea-



tures, and Universal Serial Bus support. Matching 15-in. and 17-in. Trinitron monitors include a built-in speaker and subwoofer set.

What differentiates these PCs are the case design—you can access any component without

tools in this sleek plastic shell—and the software bundle. The VAIO Space front end is a high tech Microsoft Box that doesn't insult your intelligence. You can launch games and applications from this interface, as well as control all the audio-video aspects of the machine. You'll also find a huge bundle of

software, including an enhanced Direct 3D version of Activision's *MechWarrior 2*. Expect Sony to develop titles to take advantage of the units' impressive software MPEG capabilities.

With color-coded ports, easy access, the most complete sys-

tem help files we've ever seen, and high-performance components, Sony seems to have done its homework. The only inadequacy we noticed when working with the machine was the lack of true wavetable sound. Music is provided by an OPL3 synth chip, with an optional software based wavetable emulation mode that eats valuable processor power. With Sony plastering the machine with the VAIO (Video Audio Integrated Operation), it's surprising to see them skimp on wavetable music support.

Also of interest to gamers were prototype DVD-ROM players shown by Toshiba, Panasonic, and other compa-

continued on page 33 ...

ON THE SHELF

Here are some of the hottest products on the market, as well as

the ones that frankly ain't so hot. Reviews for most are coming soon.

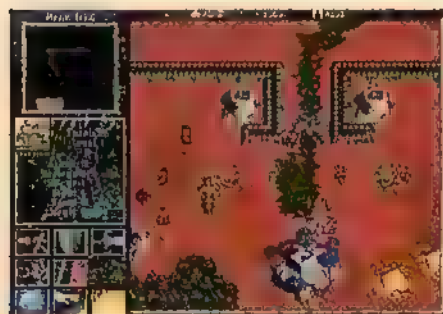
WARCRAFT II: BEYOND THE DARK PORTAL



The Orcs and Humans are back with a vengeance in the *WARCRAFT II* Expansion Set. After their defeat, the Orcs

have retreated into the Dark Portal to regroup and conquer anew. The humans' plan is to follow the Orcs through the Dark Portal to annihilate the Orcs once and for all. The Expansion Set features new campaigns with different missions for humans and Orcs, and

several improvements, including 50 new maps and new Orc terrain complete with gurgling volcanos and mushroom trees. It also introduces unique stats for different heroes, an improvement over *WARCRAFT II*, whose heroes had the same stats as the normal troops. For example, Alleria, the archer heroine, has triple hit points, good armor, maximum sight, and



continued from page 32

nies. Expect to see the first DVD-ROM players hitting the market in early fall (The possible addition of a copy-protection feature to allay Hollywood's piracy paranoia could delay the units slightly.) Price should be around \$700 for the initial units, which will include a DVD player (supporting DVD discs storing from 4.7 GB to 17 GB of data, as well as conventional CD ROM discs), as well as an expansion card with MPEG 2 video and Dolby AC-3 surround-sound audio support. Activision and Access are among the companies currently developing DVD-ROM titles.

One surprising piece of news was that DVD players won't be able to play current CD R write once CD ROMs due to changes in the laser reading mechanism; new CD R discs in the works should solve this problem. —D. Atkin

Sid Meier Finds New Settlement 'Civ' Designer Forms Game Company With 2 Others From M-Prose

The designer who is sometimes called the "Father of Computer Games" has left MicroProse—a company he co-founded—to start a new game development house. Sid Meier, who designed the classic *CIVILIZATION*, is joined by former MicroProse members Brian Reynolds and Jeff Briggs in the new development company, named Firaxis Software. Reynolds, a designer and programmer, and Briggs, director of product development at MicroProse, were instrumental in developing MicroProse's Sid Meier brand of strategy and simulation games—*COLONIZATION*, *CIVILIZATION* and *Civ II*, *RAILROAD TYCOON* and *F15 STRIKE EAGLE*. The new company, based in Hunt Valley, MD, will maintain Meier's traditional focus on strategy games, according to

Briggs. Meier adds that, "we're known for moving forward with each game, not just repeating the old ones. We want to create innovative new products, even while staying with the strategy genre." The new company will consist of a small, "hand-picked" group of programmers, musicians, artists, and designers, to be assembled around the designing and programming core of Reynolds and Meier.

MicroProse, acquired four years ago by Spectrum HoloByte, has been beset by financial problems for several months. During the summer MicroProse laid off nearly half of its staff, of which 30 employees were from the Hunt Valley, MD, division. In late June the company obtained foreign investment to remain listed on the NASDAQ stock exchange. CEO Stephen M. Race said the company had "negative tangible net worth," and had to seek an infusion



Meier has agreed to work with MicroProse as a consultant until the completion of *Magic: The Gathering*, (projected to release this fall).

Meier and company say that Firaxis will focus on creating and programming games, while leaving packaging and marketing issues to an outside publishing partner. The company is currently accepting proposals from all major publishers, "including MicroProse," says an enthusiastic Briggs. —J. Anderson

does a whopping triple damage. *WARCRAFT II: BEYOND THE DARK PORTAL* is a must for any blood-thirsty *WARCRAFT* fan. —A. Ng
PC CD ROM
Blizzard, (800) 953 7669
Reader Service #302

WITCHAVEN II: BLOOD VENGEANCE

WITCHAVEN II is a rehash of *WITCHAVEN*, with some minor changes. Capstone's *Doom* clone is largely more of the same, apart from some changes in level design, the addition of some new enemies, and new weapons variations. *WITCHAVEN II* uses an early model of the 3D Realms' Build engine (used to create *DJKE NUKEM 3D*), and the game even includes the level editor, but while it has some nice graphics in high-res mode, it can't compare



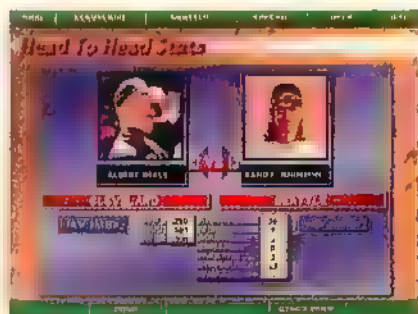
Entertainment Inc., (305) 373-3770
Reader Service #303

TONY LA RUSSA BASEBALL 3: 1996 EDITION

Seattle vs. Cleveland. It's the bottom of the 9th, two outs, nobody on, score tied 4-4. Randy Johnson's on the mound but he's tired, and Albert Belle (just back from suspension) is coming to bat. If you were Seattle's manager, what would you do? *TONY LA RUSSA BASEBALL 3: 1996 EDITION* is

to Duke's sophistication or engrossing gameplay —T. Nguyen
PC CD ROM
Intracorp

Stormfront's update to their great baseball sim that adds a crucial piece of real-life strategy to the mix: head-to-head stats between every pitcher and batter so you can check out, on-the-fly, how your player has historically matched up against his opponent. Numbers junkies will also like the new situational stats, which let you see how batters have performed in a variety of circumstances (on the road, at night, on artificial turf, etc.). Less



Scoop!

MechWarrior 3 Sighted

FASA To Convert Virtual World's BattleTech To The PC

Following the tremendous popularity of MECHWARRIOR 2, no less than four companies are currently waging new MechWarrior games. The story behind the struggle for rights, licensing and ownership of the successful property often appears as a real-life analog to the mecha

MERCENARIES). After that, Activision will no longer have rights to the MechWarrior property. Spectrum HoByte purchased the license and is currently planning MECHWARRIOR 3. But Spectrum will not be developing the game; they will go to Virtual World Entertainment and BattleTech creators, FASA, for that

Virtual World Entertainment created the location-based BattleTech virtual reality game. Now, it is officially merging with the FASA Corporation, creators of the BattleTech Universe upon which MECHWARRIOR 2 is based. The resulting new company, called FASA Interactive Technologies, will design MECHWARRIOR 3. FASA

Interactive will port the Virtual World BattleTech engine to the PC and use it as the MECHWARRIOR 3 engine. And since the guys behind the MECHWARRIOR 3 storyline will be the originals—the FASA

Corporation itself—we can expect even more intensive storylines and great missions that are consistent with the BattleTech Universe. Expect at least an 18 month development before FASA's giant mech's reach the PC.—Elliott Chin



MECHWARRIOR 3 Here's the BattleTech game already running on a P90 with 16 MB of RAM and an insane custom video board.

nized clan rivalry depicted in the games.

Activision, which published MECHWARRIOR and MECHWARRIOR 2, will publish one more MECHWARRIOR game, a prequel titled MERCENARIES (see our Space Sim fall lineup feature for more on

CIVILIZATION II remains firmly in the number one spot this month, while WARCRAFT II kicks DUKE NUKEM 3D back into second place. FANTASY GENERAL climbs higher up the chart, and EF2000 returns after a few month's absence.

Note to veteran game-heads: you won't find the CGW Poll Card bound into the magazine anymore. Yes, it's been a long-standing tradition, and no, we haven't dumped it to pacify corporate deities. We're doing it more efficiently now by mailing a comprehensive survey to 1,500 subscribers chosen by hair color each month. The results from the survey will be used to generate the Top 100 Games and Playing Lately.

READERS' TOP 10

| | Last Month | Months On Chart |
|---|------------|-----------------|
| 1 Civilization II (Microprose) | 1 | 3 |
| 2 Warcraft II (Blizzard) | 2 | 6 |
| 3 Duke Nukem 3D (3D Realms) | 3 | 4 |
| 4 Steel Panthers (SSI) | 4 | 8 |
| 5 Fantasy General (SSI) | 9 | 2 |
| 6 Command and Conquer (Virgin/Westwood) | 5 | 9 |
| 7 Wing Commander IV (Origin) | 6 | 8 |
| 8 EF 2000 (Ocean) | - | 2 |
| 9 Heroes of Might and Magic (New World Computing) | 7 | 8 |
| 10 Panzer General (SSI) | 8 | 17 |

ON THE SHELF

lasy and action-oriented than HARBALL 5, and a bit harder to learn, TLRB 3 '96 is still a lot of fun to play and abounds in nice touches, including monitored pitch speed, robust fantasy league play and detailed announcing from the late, great Mel Allen (along with Lon Simmons and Hank Greenwald) that actually enriches the experience. Arcade gamers should stick with HARBALL, but stat geeks and armchair managers will have a field day with this one.—J. Green

PC CD-ROM

Stormfront Studios, (415) 479-2800

Reader Service #304

DEATHKEEP

This is SSI's final Dungeons & Dragons role-playing game, and it's obvious that the company didn't want to invest too many resources in the project. While DEATHKEEP does



have a nice rendered intro and beautiful culscenes, the gameplay graphics look dated

DEATHKEEP has the standard features of a D&D RPG, such as character stats, advancement through increased experience, a D&D armor class system, as well as classes and races. However, the game limits players to one of three characters at the outset, and they each have predetermined stats, class and race. So you can't roll your own character or choose its origins. Still, there are quite

a few interesting dungeons to explore, and the environment is 3D, allowing you to jump, fly (with the appropriate spell) and look all around. There isn't much to recommend DEATHKEEP, but considering the dearth of quality games in the genre, it isn't really that bad.—E. Chin

Win 95 CD-ROM

SSI, (800) 601 7529

Reader Service #305

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NOV
LOGI

Biz Bytes

MechWarrior 2 Hits DWANGO

Activision is taking its award-winning *MECHWARRIOR 2* online at DWANGO's 26 game servers throughout North America and the Far East. The *MECHWARRIOR 2* network pack, called NetMech, will integrate DWANGO's (Dial-Up Wide Area Network Gaming Operation) access software, a client/server and proprietary codec software, that claims to offer real-time, head-to-head play via modem or multiplayer (up to eight players) network combat. In addition, players in the U.S., Canada and Japan will receive five free hours of DWANGO service. You'll need those free hours since it will take approximately two hours to download the program, even with a 28.8kbps modem. NetMech should be available for downloading from Activision's (<http://www.activision.com>), and DWANGO's (<http://www.dwango.com>) Web sites by the time

you read this, with the retail version on store shelves around mid-summer.

J. Anderson

Wing Commander News

Chris Roberts, creator and designer of the popular *Wing Commander* series of PC games, has resigned from Origin/EA to form his own company. After producing four *Wing Commander* games since 1990, Roberts will be flying solo, and he declined to comment on his future plans.

Meanwhile, EA is already laying plans for *Wing Commander V*. This time the game is being programmed from scratch, so it will take about two years to develop, according to company spokesperson David Swolford. Most of the issues related to full-motion video, game design actors and other questions have not been resolved, he said.

In the meantime, Saturday morning cartoon fans will soon

SELLING SPACE IN SPACE

In space, everyone can hear you advertise. At least, that's what ThrustMaster is hoping. The purveyor of game controllers is the first

in the game, which will be owned by player-controlled corporations, but sponsored by paid advertisers, who will have their logos plastered on the side



company to jump on an innovative advertising scheme in PC's upcoming multiplayer game *PLANETARY RAIDERS*. It seems there are 12 space stations

of a station. It's an innovative idea (similar to an ad for *Last Action Hero* plastered on a real rocket—we hope, for ThrustMaster's sake, this is a bit more effective.) We

also hope it stays limited to industry companies. Do you really want to be tasked with defending *Space Station Chechos*? —D. Alkin

be viewing a *Wing Commander* animated series. The show, currently entitled *Wing Commander Academy*, will feature voice talents of three of the most prominent actors in *Wing I & V*: Mark Hamill, Tom Wilson and Malcolm McDowell. Emmy

award-winning actress Dana Delany (*China Beach*) will be lending her voice as well. Thirteen half-hour episodes are currently in production for the show, which will air on the USA cable network beginning in September. —K. Brown

ON THE SHELF



sucked into a world laced with drugs, murder and beautiful but deadly women, as you search for the dame's missing brother. The game successfully recreates the ambiance of Chandler's era. Jazz plays hauntingly in the background, interrupted by an occasional police siren, the hard-boiled gumshoe has the customary Bogey-type drawl. There are also some nice character traits entwined with gameplay: Marlowe becomes reflective when he drinks, so if you need a recap of the case, just reach for the bourbon bottle in your desk drawer. Plus there's an alternative ending for Chandler fans who've read the original *Little Sister*. The downside? I found the

sucked into a world laced with drugs, murder and beautiful but deadly women, as

Saturday morning cartoon-style animation rather flat and some of the voice-acting from minor characters was pretty stiff. Nonetheless, it's a good adaptation and will entertain Chandler fans and adventure gamers alike. —C. Panther
PC CD-ROM
Byron Press Multi-Media, (800) 945-3155
Reader Service #306

DYNAMITE 128

Windows 95 may be the emerging gaming platform, but let's face it: most of the games we're playing today still run in good ol' DOS. Hercules has been king in DOS performance, with their STINGRAY 64 Video product, and it looks like the king may be dethroned by yet another Hercules product.

The DYNAMITE 128 uses the new Tseng ET6000 chip and a new DRAM technology, multibank

DRAM (MDRAM), to move vast amounts of data very quickly. The result is a PC Bench 9.0 graphics harmonic score of over 10,000—the fastest we've ever seen, even on a Pentium 166. The frame rate of games like ATF can definitely benefit from this kind of data rate. In addition, the DYNAMITE 128 is no slouch in Windows, coming within a hair of the Matrox MILLENNIUM in Windows benchmarks.

One downside: Despite being a very fast 2D board, the DYNAMITE lacks 3D functionality, and is a bit pricey to boot. But if you're still playing DOS games, want a quick Windows card, and are delaying making a 3D card purchase, check this out. —L. Case
PC
Hercules Computer Technology, (800) 532-0600;
<http://www.hercules.com>
Reader Service #307

Microsoft Finally Ships Direct3D

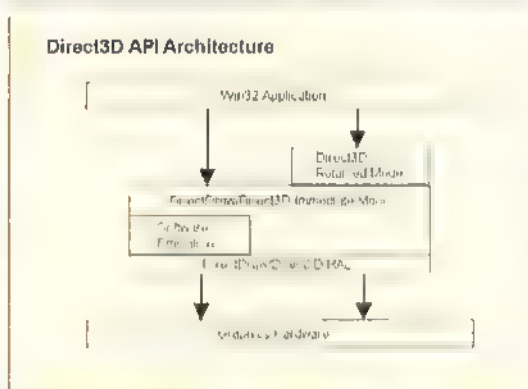
API Is Considered Key To The 3D Revolution

Microsoft recently shipped its DirectX 2.0 Software Developer's Kit (SDK), which includes the much anticipated Direct3D Application Programming Interface (API). This API will allow game developers to write one set of code for their 3D action titles, and have it run on all the different 3D graphics boards that are starting to ship. Direct3D is tightly integrated with Microsoft's DirectDraw API, which handles 2D graphics and digital video duties, and Direct3D has provisions for software emu-

lation—where work is performed on the host CPU—if a 3D graphics chip doesn't accelerate a desired rendering feature. Direct3D can also profile a 3D accelerator to determine where a rendering feature can be optimally accelerated, on the host or by the 3D graphics chip. There has been a great deal of confusion surrounding

Direct3D, with hardware vendors clamoring for its completion, and cautious game developers supporting Direct3D on one hand, but still cranking out some DOS titles to hedge their bets for Christmas '96. The API is the lynch pin for much of the 3D revolution, and with Direct3D's arrival, all players concerned can pretty much say, "let the good

times roll." Microsoft plans to ship several Direct3D titles for Christmas this year, and other developers also have Direct3D titles in the works that may be home for Christmas as well. As we get Direct3D-based titles in, we'll have them on several different boards and tell you what we find. On the hardware side, two boards based on S3's VIRGE are shipping (see our review this issue), ATI is shipping its Xpression 3D, and Diamond is shipping the nVidia-based Edge3D. Orchid will be shipping its 3Dfx-based Righteous 3D board sometime in July. Another July arrival should be Creative Labs' Rendition-based 3D Blaster PCI, and Matrox should be shipping its Mystique-based board in late August. —D. Salvador



Microsoft's Direct3D API is the component that will make widely available 3D titles happen, allowing them to run on any 3D graphics board.

ON THE SHELF

BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN PC

BOLD TOSHINDEN was the game that defined the Sony PlayStation, with flashy graphics and 3D polygon power. The first 3D fighting game to allow movement along the z-axis, TOSHINDEN let you dodge left and right, and applied a lot of panning to emphasize the 3D graphics. Yet, underneath all the glitz was a mediocre fighting game that true fighting fans soon ditched.

Well, as we look at the PC version, all the

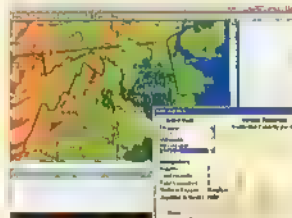


gameplay has ported over nicely, but the graphics have taken a major two-hit combo. The

graphics in TOSHINDEN PC suffer a lot of pixelation, blocky polygons and low resolution. Moreover, the frame rate seems to have taken a slight hit as well. The heads of characters, which in PlayStation TOSHINDEN were composed of many shaded polygons, now are single rectangles with poor textures mapped on. The 3D effects, such as the z axis movement and panning camera, are still here but they can't begin to make up for the sloppy visuals. So an arcade game with great 3D graphics and mediocre gameplay comes to the PC with the same mediocre gameplay, and now incredibly poor graphics. —E. Chin
Windows 95 CD-ROM
Playmates Interactive, (714) 562-1743,
Reader Service #308

AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

While it's hard to recognize with the graphic overhaul, AMERICAN CIVIL WAR is really THE ROAD FROM SUMTER TO APPOMATOX



in its third incarnation. Interactive Magic has spiced this with some nice multimedia touches and the core game is still as rich as ever.

The fog of war is realistic yet manageable, which allows McClellan to stumble around not knowing where Lee is, for example. Supply is streamlined from Sumter, but still allows inveterate micro-managers to fiddle with munitions and foodstuffs if they must. The leader ratings are still dynamic, showing why inept commanders such as Ben Butler were trounced by the likes of Stonewall Jackson. The biggest change is that the poor tactical module of Sumter has been discarded for a more elegant, if less visceral, strategic combat routine. As we've said before, this is the only strategic level Civil War game worth owning. —T. Coleman
PC CD-ROM
Interactive Magic, (919) 461-0722
Reader Service #310

3DO TAKES OVER THE (NEW) WORLD

3DO announced intentions to acquire New World Computing, publisher of last year's award winning ANVIL

OF DAWN and HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC. The purchase is guaranteed to have a value in excess of \$13.5 million and is subject to a due diligence review and regular closing procedures. The impending acquisition reflects 3DO's growing involvement in the PC platform and extends its reach into the Strategy and Role Playing genre. New World Computing will continue to function as its own entity and maintain its operations and staffing in southern California; however, it will publish titles under the 3DO Studios umbrella.

Adding to its repertoire of platforms and genres, 3DO recently acquired Archetype Interactive,



creators of the RPG and fantasy-adventure game MENO AN 59. After relocating to Redwood City, CA, and resuming operations under the 3DO name, the former Archetype Interactive group will continue to focus on establishing a strong presence in Internet gaming. And earlier this year, 3DO acquired Cyclone Studios (makers of console games, CAPTAIN QUASAR and BATTLE SPORT), which continues to develop advanced-console (64-bit), action arcade style games under its own name, yet also publishes under the 3DO Studios name. "We want to make sure we deliver games in all the core genre that people want," says 3DO public relations manager, Diane Hunt. For more perspective on the acquisitions, see Johnny's Wilson's article on CGW's AOL site: keyword: CGW. J. Anderson

HOW BIG IS THE GAME BIZ?

Financial analysts estimate the computer game biz is now a billion dollar industry, although not everyone is making money in it. Computer entertainment software now represents about 22 percent of all retail software sales, according to PC Data of Reston, VA. Wanna start a game company? Why not, everyone else seems to be...

THE WAR COLLEGE

GOLD THE WAR COLLEGE is an updated version of the UNIVERSAL MILITARY SIMULATOR (UMS) and UMS II. It looks and plays better than the old UMS and the interface is a tremendous improvement. The game includes four battles: Pharsalus (ancient), Austerlitz (Napoleonic), Antietam (American Civil War) and Tannenberg (World War I). The encyclopedic treatment of each battle is impressive, providing players with a wealth of information before they assume com-

mand. Unfortunately, the game's ability to simulate combat during any of the four time periods portrayed is lacking. Among its failings, the combat model allows units containing only a few men to inflict as much damage as they did when at full strength. Also, horrific casualty rates are the norm. As a teaching tool, THE WAR COLLEGE is interesting, but as a game, those who prefer a dose of reality with their historical war games should look elsewhere. -P. Miller
PC CD-ROM

GameTek, (800) 426-3835
Reader Service #311

DINOTOPIA

You may think you've seen your fair share of prehistoric monsters, but I bet you've never seen a dinosaur knitting while brooding over her eggs, or playing cards with a gypsy like Velociraptor. Welcome to DINOTOPIA, an island where humans and dinosaurs live together in perfect domestic harmony. Based on James Gurney's best

selling, lavishly illustrated book, this game will dispel any preconceptions you may have about dinosaurs being vicious cold-blooded killers.

As Nathan Drake, you find yourself washed up on the island after a shipwreck. Your mission is to locate your twin sister Constance. To fulfill the quest you must discover how to communicate in the Dinotopian language, while collecting items to add to your inventory. The skill lies in figuring out how best to use these items as you navigate the island. Some objects may help you solve puzzles, others can be traded for information about Constance.

DINOTOPIA is intended for children but will certainly appeal to adults, too. Although the game is too easy for experienced adventure-gamers, the user-friendly interface, rich graphics and relatively straightforward puzzles make this a good choice for new gamers, or for those who wish to ease themselves into the genre gently. -C. Panther
PC CD-ROM

Turner Home Entertainment, (800) 294-0022
Reader Service #309

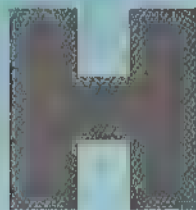


HANDS ON

These are the products in development we've actually spent some time with. They represent some of the most interesting

titles in the Pipeline, and they are complete enough to actually tell how they're going to play. Most should be released soon.

Shattered Steel



ere's a novel idea for a game: giant robots duking it out over alien landscapes! Okay, so maybe Interplay's SHATTERED STEEL isn't

ful SVGA graphics, with fully-textured, topographically varied terrains for you to fight on. Lighting and motion effects are first-rate, and the alien robots have a bizarre, insect-like appearance, like something William S. Burroughs might have created in metal shop. The game offers a variety of



goals, including escort rescue and decoy missions, as well as head-to-head modem and network play.

Best of all, for some, will be the fact that, unlike MECHWARRIOR, you can jump into this

that or giant—but it's more than just a MECHWARRIOR 2 clone. It's great-looking, challenging and has enough twists to justify its existence.

It's 2132 and you're a mercenary sent to investigate disturbances at a mining compound on a distant planet. You discover a hostile alien race and you need to bring them flowers as a way to start peace negotiations. Just kidding. Actually, you get to blast them all to smithereens with 30 weapons over 70 non-linear missions.

Designed by BioWare with an engine developed by PyroTek, SHATTERED STEEL features beautiful

game immediately. I was able to blast my way through the first few missions without one glimpse at a manual. Though one snotty CGW staffer called it "MechWussier," that really doesn't do this promising game justice. —J. Green
Interplay Productions, (714) 553-6655.

PC CD ROM

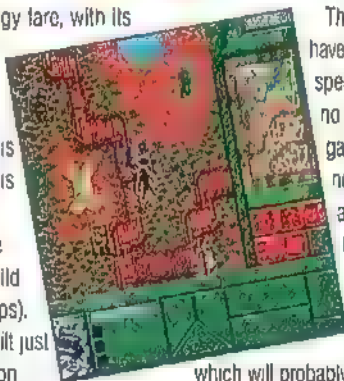
Blood & Magic

Interplay's first *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* game is a little different from the usual real time strategy fare, with its new twists on building and troop recruitment.

Everything in the game hinges on the Basil Golem. This is the basic unit you start with, and is also the only unit that can build structures and collect manna (the game's only resource, used in building structures and recruiting troops).

Structures, though, can't be built just anywhere. They can only be built on Mystic Sites, and most of these are already occupied by enemy structures. This means you'll have to engage your foe and wipe out his structure before you can plant your Golem at the Mystic Site for construction. There are five different structures, and each allows up to four different types of troops.

Troops can't be recruited at whim, either. You



need to research them first by expending experience points, which are gained by creating Basil Golems and defeating enemy troops.

The beta version we played did have a few problems. The game speed was too slow—there were no controls for speeding up gameplay—and the troop AI also needed work. Another annoyance was a high pitched laugh that sounded each time we clicked on a new unit.

While BLOOD & MAGIC does have a few flaws, most of which will probably be fixed, the game looks quite good. This short preview can't really do justice to the game, because there's quite a bit of complexity here. The important thing is that real time strategists looking for something different will want to keep their eyes peeled for this one. —E. Chin

Interplay, (714) 553-6655.

PC CD ROM

PIPELINE

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| 10th Planet | Bethesda | 9/96 |
| Age of Rifles | SSI | 8/96 |
| Aide De Camp 2 | HPS Simulations | Summer 96 |
| Belrayal In Antara | Sierra | 9/96 |
| Blood | 3D Reams/FormGen | Summer 96 |
| Callahan's Crosstime Saloon | Legend | 10/96 |
| Crusader: No Regret | Origin | 9/96 |
| Daggerfall | Bethesda | Summer 96 |
| Dark Earth | Mindscape | 10/96 |
| Diablo | Blizzard | September 96 |
| Elk Moon Murder | Activision | 8/96 |
| F22 Nova | Logic | Winter 96 |
| Guardians of Destiny | Virgin | Summer 96 |
| Flying Nightmares 2000 | Domark | Summer 96 |
| Front Page Baseball Pro | Sierra | Fall 96 |
| Heroes of Might and Magic II | New World | 10/96 |
| History of the World | Avalon Hill | Fall 96 |
| Interstate 76 | Activision | Winter 96 |
| Into The Shadows | Scavenger | 9/96 |
| Jagged Alliance: Deadly Games | Sir-Tech | 8/96 |
| Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II | LucasArts | 2/97 |
| Jettfighter III | Mission Studios | Fall 96 |
| John Madden Football 97 | EA Sports | Fall/96 |
| Last Blitzkrieg | SSG | Summer 96 |
| Leisure Suit Larry 7 | Sierra | Fall 96 |
| Magic of Xanth | Legend | Fall 96 |
| Master of Orion 2: Anlares | MicroProse | Summer 96 |
| Meridian 59 | Archetype/3DO | Summer 96 |
| Myst II | Broderbund | Fall 96 |
| Necrodome | SSI | 8/96 |
| Nemesis | Sir-Tech | 9/96 |
| NFL Legends | Accolade | 8/96 |
| Noir | Cyberdreams | 9/96 |
| One Must Fall | Epic | Fall 96 |
| Over the Reich | Avalon Hill | 9/96 |
| Pacific Tide | Arsenal | Fall 96 |
| Privateer | Origin Systems | 10/96 |
| Red Alert | Virgin/Westwood | 10/96 |
| Return to Kronder | 7th Level | Fall 96 |
| Reverence | Cyberdreams | Fall 96 |
| Risk! | Hasbro Interactive | Fall 96 |
| Robert E. Lee | Sierra | 8/96 |
| Scrabble | Hasbro Interactive | 9/96 |
| Shadows Over Alva | Sir-Tech | 8/96 |
| Shattered Steel | Interplay | 9/96 |
| SimGolf | Maxis | Summer 96 |
| Star Craft | Blizzard | Winter 96 |
| Star Fleet Academy | Interplay | Winter 96 |
| Star General | SSI | 11/96 |
| Star Trek: Generations | MicroProse | 9/96 |
| SuperHeroes | MicroProse | 8/96 |
| Syndicate Wars | EA | 9/96 |
| The Mindwarp | Maxis | 8/96 |
| Third Reich | Avalon Hill | 8/96 |
| TimeLapse | GTE Entertainment | 8/96 |
| Tomb Raiders | Domark/Eidos | Winter 96 |
| Trivial Pursuit | Hasbro Interactive | Fall/96 |
| Ultima Online | Origin | Winter 96 |
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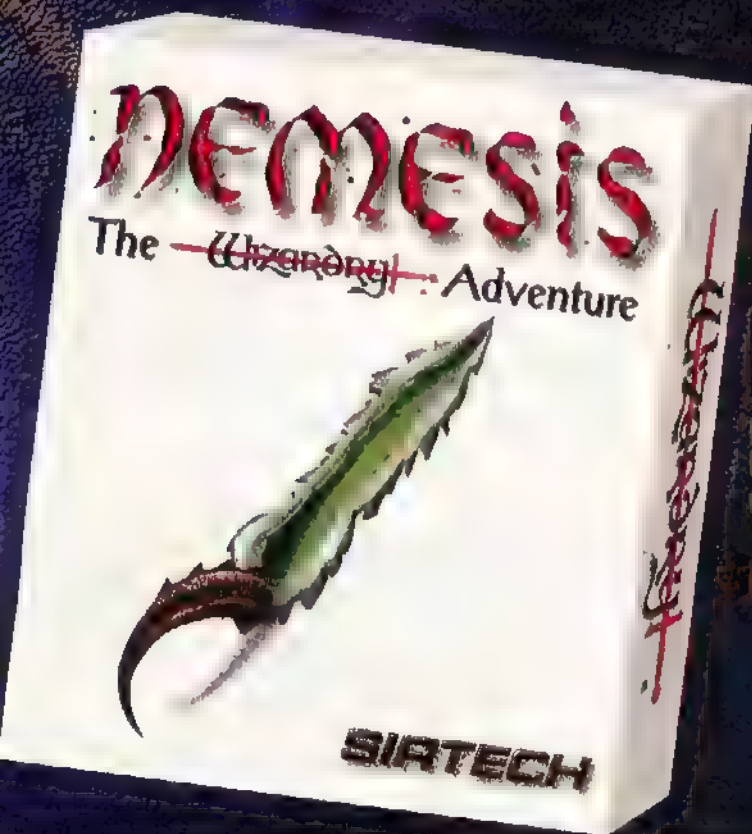
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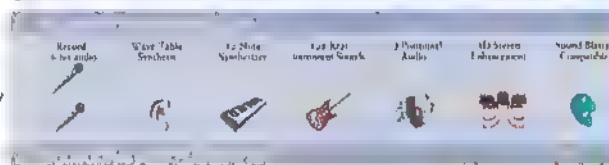
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BIG GAME HUNT

A crack team of *CGW* editors recently set out to track down that most elusive of beast: the soon-to-be-shipping game program. We stalked the wilds of Silicon Valley and the halls of the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), tracking the herd of titles while braving a stampede of marketing flacks. In many cases, armed with only their critical eyes, these editors actually jumped in and tried to subdue these pre-beta beasts, even though many were months from being tamed. ("While Marlon sits back in the jeep and enjoys a nice cool drink, Jim will attempt to run this early alpha version with only 390K of free conventional memory.")

In the pages that follow, you'll find some of the most promising, most exciting, and most anticipated titles slated for release between now and the new year. Many of these aren't far enough along to give a firm estimated ship date, but if you don't see a date listed you can expect to see the program on store shelves by or before the "well, we meant to ship it in time for Christmas" post-holiday season.

Because of the size of this herd, we've concentrated primarily on titles you haven't yet read details of in these pages. Separate safari guides are leaving now for each of the gaming genres, so strap in and get ready to pick your targets.





QUAKE

Since our preview in the July issue, there have been a few additions to id's latest demonic progeny, Quake. The weapons are even more cruelly rendered now; for instance, the super-nailgun now has two barrels. Quake boasts levels far more elaborate than the DOOM series, and is set to challenge all comers in both single and multiplayer outings.

Since our visit to id several weeks ago, a back story has been revealed to set the carnage in context, courtesy of id's John Romero. As a commando for the good guys, you've been bridled on a new device called a Slippgate, which can crack a hole in the time continuum, allowing time travel. But there's one problem. An evil fiend, or group of fiends, called "Quake," has figured out how to use Slippgates as well, possibly in an attempt to launch a surprise invasion of Earth. Your mission: find Quake, and take him—or them—out, using any means necessary. While you embark on your hunt, Quake pays a visit to your headquarters and turns it into a morgue. Upon returning to the grisly scene, you discover that Quake has escaped through the Slippgate. Seeing that the coordinates on the Slippgate are still set to their headquarters, you teleport through the Slippgate, arriving at the Quake hideout where your odyssey begins.

Quake should be shipping around the time you read this. id Software/ET Interactive, (800) 981-1030, DOS

JEDI KNIGHT: DARK FORCES II

JEDI KNIGHT, the amazing looking sequel to DARK FORCES, has all the good qualities of the original, and then some. Set in the seedier side of the Star Wars universe, our hero from DARK FORCES, Kyle Katarn, has now begun a quest to become a Jedi Knight. As his training and the game progresses, he encounters the Dark Jedi Jerec and his six Jedi lieutenants. Soon Kyle must choose whether he will join the Dark Side or serve the forces of good to battle Jerec and his minions, who wish to harness the power of an old Jedi burial ground to enslave the galaxy.

LucasArts, heeding the cries of disgruntled gamers, has added multiplayer play over network, modem and direct link, and even a save game feature. There will be new weapons—including a Light Saber—and new monsters. As a Jedi Knight in training, after you finish each level you will gain experience points and Jedi powers. Jedi KNIGHT isn't just a run-and-gun spree through level after level, since there is a cast of recurring villains as well as the possibility of branching to good or evil Jedi training.

CGW saw a 3D-enhanced version of Jedi KNIGHT running on a Rendition board, and we found that the graphics in this mode look even better than Quake. Look for the game to ship in late winter. LucasArts, (415) 444-8330, Windows 95

CRUSADER: NO REGRET

This title isn't CRUSADER 2 (Origin's working on that), but NO REGRET is a mouth watering morsel to hold us over until the true sequel. NO REGRET continues the story of NO REMORSE, this time bringing you to the moon to stop an evil corporate consor-

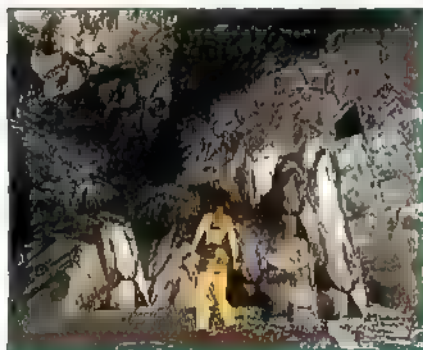
lum. There are only 10 new levels here, but the length of gameplay will probably be the same, because each level is packed with even more cool weapons and nasty enemies. Some of the new weapons will freeze and shatter opponents, melt the flesh from their bones or literally reduce them to a pile of bones and body parts. New enemies include at least three new mechs, including a morphing mech that will lie in ambush in the form of a soda machine, table, or other mundane object. The enemy AI has also been beefed-up. Now, enemies have access to the same weapons and same moves as you, so watch out for troops who roll in and out of cover, blasting you with freeze-guns.

Origin/EA, (512) 335-5200, DOS



TOMB RAIDERS

Playing Indiana Jones could be fun. Playing a mean, pistol-packing, tomb-robbing "Indiana Jane" is probably even more fun. That's the theory behind Eidos's **TOMB RAIDERS**, a 3D shooter played from a behind-the-back perspective. The graphics in this game, especially in the 3Dfx version we saw, are beautiful,



consisting of texture mapped, gouraud-shaded polygons, amazing light-sourcing and full 3D effects for a breathtaking, immersive world. In this shooter, you play

Lara Croft, a tomb raider who is exploring various ruins around the world in search of an ancient artifact called the Scion. Her search takes her to various tombs in Peru, Egypt, Cambodia and other exotic locales. There, you'll find clues, solve puzzles and blast away any beast or man who stands in your way. Though only in its early stage of development, this game is already noteworthy for the rough and tough female lead and the amazing graphics. The main character has thousands of frames of animation; she can run, jump, swim, ride, pull herself up onto ledges, and has incredibly fluid and realistic movement. The game is slated for a winter release.

Eidos, (415) 616-2022, Windows 95

ECSTASY 2

ECSTASY 2, from Psygnosis, is an action game with a heavy dose of adventure elements. The environments are all pre-rendered, so movement isn't as flexible as in a polygonal world like **QUAKE**. But the graphics are highly detailed, and the character has a range of fluid, realistic moves. More so than in the original, the view-

ing area changes according to what you do, and you'll sometimes play from a close up side view, a top-down view, or even an isometric view.



ECSTASY 2 also has a few fighting game influences, allowing you to perform special attacks like spinning slashes. The game is set in medieval times; once again you play the young warrior from the original ECSTASY, who must battle an evil Archmage who does what evil Archmages do best: threaten to destroy the universe.

Psygnosis, (800) (800) 438-7794, DOS

INTO THE SHADOWS

Boasting a true 3D engine with impressive light-sourcing and high res graphics, INTO THE SHADOWS is a remarkable advancement over previous dungeon romps. The D&D-style action game is set in a detailed castle laced with shadows and light, where the player battles ugly denizens with a variety of medieval weapons. Dynamic panning has been used to deepen the sense of immersion, to better effect than that seen in **ALONE IN THE DARK**. Although there is the usual key and item-searching, the main focus is action: large, motion-captured characters stab, slice and clobber each other like many arcade-style fighting games. Not only are the



movements fluid and realistic, but special doubling techniques create the illusion that the polygonal characters are more detailed than they really are. The game's graphics

engine has been in development for three years, and it looks superb—if a little short on blood and gore. INTO THE SHADOWS should support up to eight players over a network.

Scavenger/IT Interactive, (800) 601-1930

DOS and Windows 95

VIRTUA FIGHTER PC

When VIRTUA FIGHTER first hit the arcades, it revolutionized the fighting game genre with its 3D graphics and panning camera. VIRTUA FIGHTER PC, a port of the game that started the 3D fighting craze, looks poised to do the same on the PC.



VFPC will have two graphics modes: the original blocky arcade mode and an enhanced, hi-res texture-mapped

mode. All of the VIRTUA FIGHTER arcade gameplay is intact, including all eight characters, numerous special attacks, throws, ring outs, and pouncing attacks. Using DirectX, VFPC will retain a high frame rate, high polygon count and the smooth fluid motion found in the arcade version. The good news is that special 3D hardware is not required to run VFPC. However, to achieve VFPC's visual excellence, you'll need at least a Pentium 90. So, while the game will be incredible, so will, the overhead. The only other quibble with VFPC is that it's not VIRTUA FIGHTER 2. Unfortunately, we'll have to wait a few more months for that one.

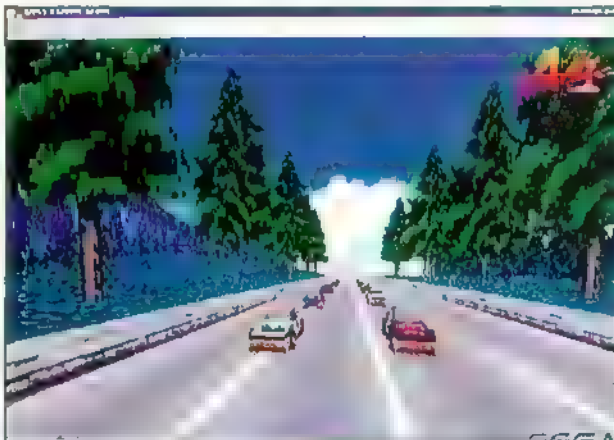
Sega Entertainment, 415-508-2800, Windows 95

BIG GAME HUNT

DAYTONA USA

This arcade racer allowed Sega to take the lead in the arcades and became the standard by which other racers were measured. Now, the same thrilling, high speed racing of Daytona USA will be available for Windows 95 users packing a minimum of a Pentium 90. This port retains all the gameplay of the arcade classic, including four separate views, three race courses, and end-over-end crashes. The graphics are nearly identical to the arcade version, and will retain most, if not all, of the original's high

frame rate and polygon count. Sega Entertainment will also be adding network play to this title so that you and your friends will be able to burn rubber in a pulse-pounding race of Daytona stock cars. Daytona USA was an instant winner in the arcades, and looks qualified to place as the number one arcade racer when it hits the PC this fall. **Sega Entertainment, (415) 508-2800, Windows 95**



MDK

MDK, the first PC game from Shiny Entertainment, the creators of Earthworm Jim, looks quite promising. You play a black clad warrior, equipped with a sniper helmet, who drops from his perch in orbit into various locations on Earth—locations infested with aliens and evil creatures. The 3D shooter has both third-person and first-person view modes. The hi-res graphics are polygonal, with good light sourcing, making for more immersive and beautiful visuals. Players used to the usual gun-blazing shooter, though, will instead have to use their wits. MDK often requires that you use your sniper helmet to take out enemies with stealth from far away, or from an ambush position. The emphasis on stealth and ambush will make play in the multiplayer mode very interesting. Shiny is also working on making the alien creatures react more intelligently to your actions. If you shoot an alien's firearm from its hand, rather than continue to attack mindlessly, it will duck behind a wall, and then stick its hand out to search for its dropped weapon. If

Shiny can actually pull off this dynamic thinking in its enemies, MDK could be a killer action title. Look for MDK in early '97.

Playmates Interactive, (714) 562-1743, DOS



ALSO IN THE WORKS

Action, in the words of the late, great Clint Eastwood, is other games in development that deserve mention. **Virtual City PD**, a spin-off of Sega's arcade hit Virtua Fighter, is a polygonal shooter set in a futuristic world behind a futuristic Virtual City police officer. With great graphics and amazing detail, VCPD is sure to carry its success over to the PC. See this month's action column for more on this title.

Outlaws, by LucasArts, is a Spaghetti Western action-adventure, using the DARK FORCES engine, but with animated cartoon characters. It's a first-person western shooter, but has heavy adventure elements, including foes and allies with distinct personalities.

SPACE BUNNIES MUST DIE, a game by Flux, could be described as a science-fiction *Watership Down* with an attitude. Don't worry—we'll explain that further in an upcoming issue.



Blade, a sequel to the first-person action-adventure game, is a game that takes place between breaks in action.

Blade, from Activision, is a first-person action-adventure game set in a futuristic world. It's a sequel to the first-person action-adventure game, Blade. It's a game that takes place between breaks in action.

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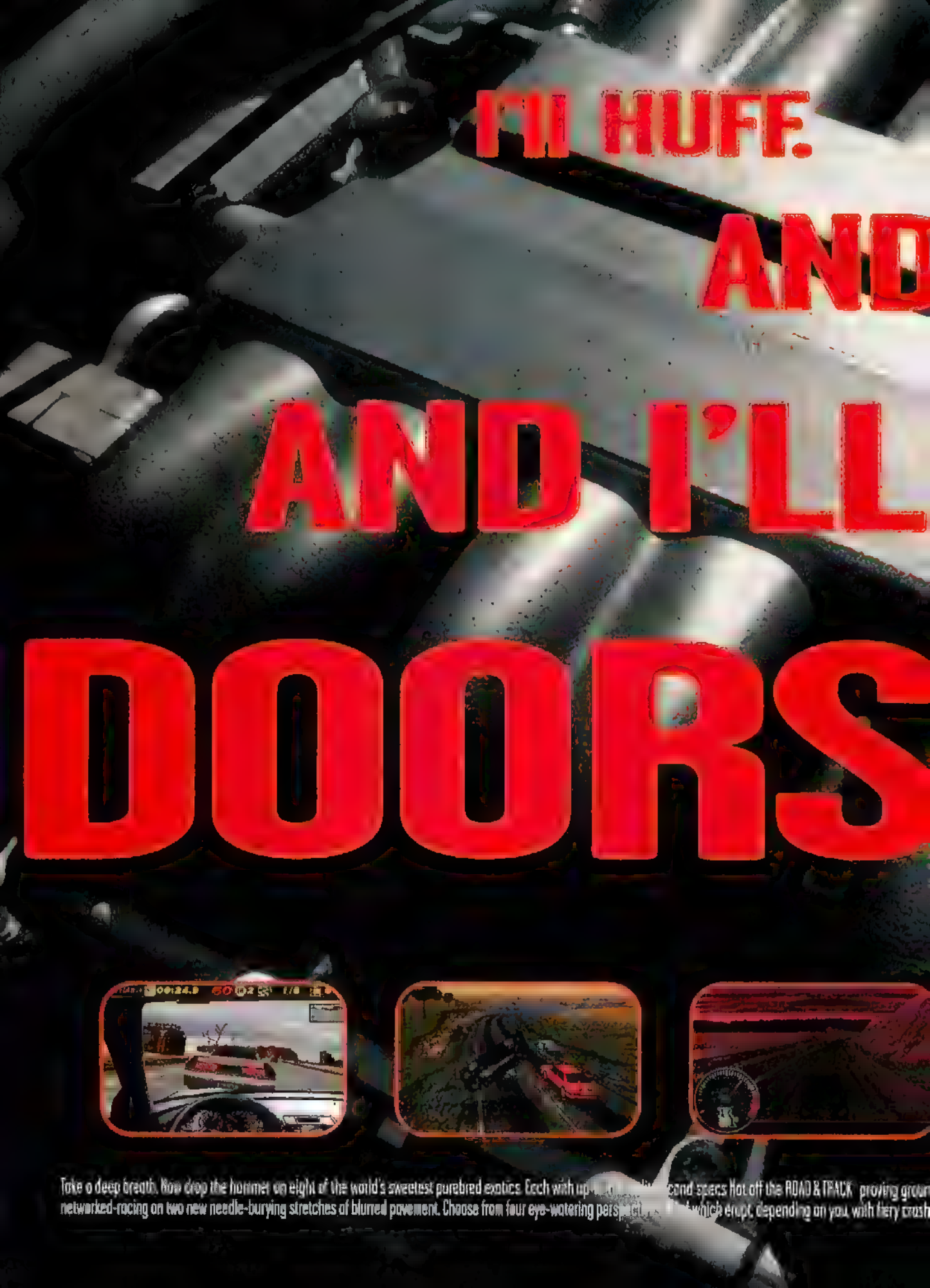
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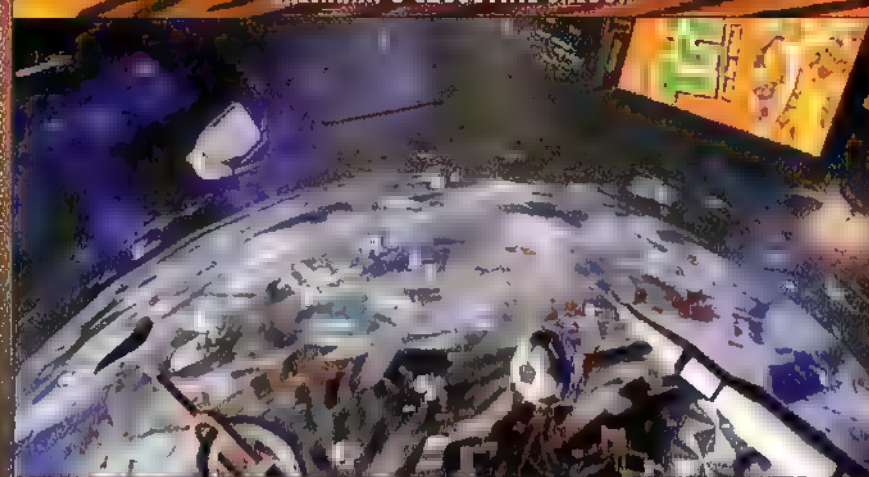
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CALLAHAN'S CROSSTIME SALOON



Think of the funniest, hippest bar you know, and then imagine it populated by vampires, time travelers, aliens—and some very drunk punsters. That's what you'll find at Callahan's Crosstime Saloon, the setting of Spider Robinson's cult classic science-fiction short stories, now being adapted as an adventure game by Legend Entertainment. As the game begins, the fate of the universe is at hand. In six separate adventures, you'll start from

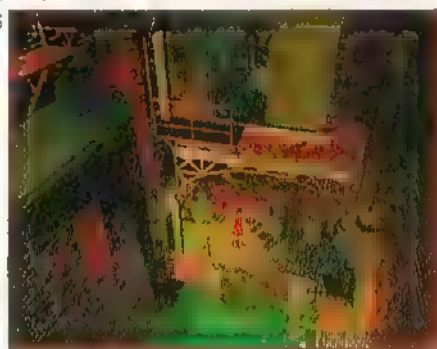
Callahan's and travel from Transwone to Brazil to outer space and beyond in an attempt to set things straight. Because Robinson's stories tend to end in punchlines rather than deep philosophical statements, it's a great sign that Legend enlisted jokester Josh Mandel (of Freddy Pharkas fame) to design the game. Expect much of Robinson's groan-worthy punning to make it into the game intact. (One example: you'll be flying to Brazil on Iva Raseadin Airline.) As a bonus, a number of big names are rumored to possibly be providing music for the game, including Leon Redbone and Harry Nilsson—and, we just learned, Spider Robinson himself, who will sing some of the songs that originally appeared in his stories. For Callahan fans, this game is a sure bet. But the uninited should be excited too. There's a mountain of talent at work here, making it our most anticipated adventure game of the coming season.

Legend, (703) 222-8500, Windows

THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN

Psygnosis' The City of Lost Children is a 3D adventure game based on the 1995 French film of the same name. Though the film, created by Jean Pierre Junet and Marc Caro

("Delicatessen"), only had a brief run in U.S. art houses, it was one of the best movies of 1995, and easily one of the great film fantasies of the past 20 years. A macabre yet beautiful mixture of Fritz Lang, Charles Dickens, Jules



Verne and David Lynch, The City of Lost Children is the story of the evil scientist Krank, who, having lost the ability to dream, is kidnapping little children in order to steal their dreams. When a circus strongman's little brother is kidnaped, he teams up with a little orphan girl to find the lost children. Along the way they encounter everything from evil Siamese twins to a talking brain to a mind poisoning tick. Psygnosis' game follows the same plot, in 3D-rendered sets modeled after the film sets. The movie's director, Marc Caro, is overseeing the game's design, and after seeing some of it he reportedly asked that it be made "darker and grimmer"—a good sign indeed. Should the gameplay match the visuals, look for this to be one of the more memorably surreal adventure games of the year.

Psygnosis, (415) 655-8000, Windows 95

WISDOM SUIT LARRY 7: YANK HER AWAY

Hard to believe, but it's now been 10 years and six releases since Larry, that loveable *loser de l'amour*, first swaggered onto our computer screens to begin his hunt for female companionship. That's longer than most software franchises (and even some computer platforms), which just goes to show you....well, we don't know what exactly. Suffice it to say that Al Lowe's comic creation is now that most unlikely of things—an Institution. This year's model finds Larry aboard a cruise ship, the HMS Bouncy (commanded by one Captain Thigh), in pursuit of the usual gaggle of gravity-defying babes. LSL 7 boasts new 3D animation, and Sierra is also promising "scratch-and-sniff puzzles"—the possibilities of which are truly frightening. Sexist and neanderthal drivel for immature guys? Of course it is.

But creator Al Lowe's humor is so deliberately, uh, broad, that—as with the films of Russ Meyers there's simply no point in

being offended. Offensiveness is the point. Not a family game by any stretch of the imagination, LSL 7 will appeal to those who like their adventures faced with ribald humor and a hearty lack of taste.

Sierra, MS-DOS, Windows 95 and 3.1

Sierra, (800) 757-7707, Windows 95



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SIERRA



THE SPACE BAR

Steve Meretzky has hitchhiked to a different part of the galaxy for his latest offbeat adventure. *THE SPACE BAR* is a murder *Myst*-ery, where you play a detective interviewing bizarre creatures in a sort of sanitized, beautified version of the Cantina in *Star Wars*. Navigating through the spolless, 3D rendered environment, you come across creatures who look freshly-extruded from a disturbed Taiwanese toymaker's mold, engaging in strange conversations using telepathy. Oftentimes the player assumes another character's perspective, such as a large bug-eyed insect, viewing the world through multiple lenses and compelled to carry out missions in order to advance the plot. It's an odd convergence of Meretzky, *Myst* and rubbery-looking aliens, but the story and script should prove strong enough to please puzzle lovers of all shapes and eyeses.

Rocket Science Games, (415) 442-5000, Windows 95 and Macintosh.



PHANTASMAGORIA 2: A PUZZLE OF FLESH

Sierra's follow-up to its grisly horror adventure of last year is not so much a sequel (Don and



Adrienne are gone) as a brand new story. *PHANTASMAGORIA 2: A PUZZLE OF FLESH* tells the tale of Curtis Craig, a man who, one year out of a mental hospital, begins experiencing a series of bizarre, horrific events that lead him to question his sanity once more. The biggest change over the original game is that all of the live action shots are being filmed entirely on sets and location, rather than blue screen, which promises to give the game a much more movie-like feel.

Sierra, (800) 757-7707, Windows 95

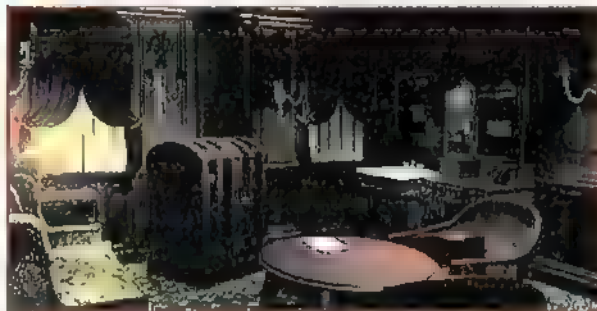
The first computer game from actor Robert DeNiro's company, Tribeca Interactive, *9* is an off the wall adventure set in a delapidated resort for aging rock stars, which you've just inherited. Your job is to fix up the place and, with the help of the various characters you'll meet, help get the musicians back on their feet. Befitting the glamour attached to this project, the game features the voices of James Belushi, Cher and Christopher Reeve, along with Aerosmith's Steven Tyler and Joe Perry. The latter two are said to have contributed

"creative input" to the project, although we can't say if that's a good thing or not. We haven't seen much gameplay yet, but 9's wonderfully surreal 3D animation, reminiscent of Jim Ludke's work in *THE RESIDENTS' BAD DAY ON THE MIDWAY* is impressive indeed, and makes it a title to watch for this fall.

Tribeca Interactive, (212) 696-2000, Windows and Mac.

TITANIC: ADVENTURE OUT-OF-TIME

This suspense thriller places you in the role of a British secret agent aboard the doomed luxury liner the night it went down in 1912. No, you can't stop the ship from sinking, but what



you can do, in the time you have left before drowning, is complete a mission that would alter history by preventing the outbreak of World War I. As in CyberFlix's *Dust*, much of the gameplay focuses on your interactions with the myriad non-player characters; how you communicate with them will ultimately affect how well you succeed. The art work that we've seen is beautiful, and is apparently a completely faithful recreation of the actual ship, down to the smallest details. CyberFlix has promised that they've toned down the over-the-top humor that turned off some gamers from *Dust*, in favor of a more suspenseful and realistic tone.

GTE Entertainment, (619) 431-8801, Windows and Mac

FURTHER ADVENTURES

PROLOGUE: Scheduled for early 1997 from New York's Sierra is not just a rehash of the movie, but rather a new story that unfolds concurrently with the film's plot. Every action the player takes has ramifications throughout the game, so multiple experiences are possible. The title we were able to see so far is impressive, with lush 3D environments and surreal characters. Also scheduled for an early 1997 release is Activision's *Phantasmagoria 2: A Puzzle of Flesh*, a 3D animated sequel to Intocom's classic text adventure. You will once again be a member of the Silent Patrol of the Third Galactic Union, involved in a completely new story that promises challenging gameplay and laughs. **PSYGNOSIS: THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU** is a real-time, 3D graphic adventure based on the H.G. Wells horror story that pits you against the insane doctor and his island of mysterious "manbeasts." **TENDER LOVING CARE** is the intriguing new project from Trilobyte (7th Guest, 11th Hour). More "interactive movie" than standard adventure fare, TLC is a psychological thriller about a young couple who, after losing their baby in a car crash, hire a live-in nurse—who complicates their life even further. Your decision-making will help determine how the story is played out.



COMING IN SEPTEMBER



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ROLE-PLAYING GAMES



7 **III LEVEL'S RETURN TO KRONDOR** IS AN ADVENTURE SET IN THE WORLD created by novelist Raymond E. Feist. It is the reign of Prince Arutha, and a religious artifact called the Tear of the

Gods must be found by the hero. Return to Krondor will feature a new 3D engine from 3D Realms, which will let the gamers participate in what the company calls "a new and different combat" engine. The game will also feature a new "a story-based combat" system that will let the player "see and hear" the action. It will incorporate animation videos, "more than 200" non-player characters, Feist says it will incorporate some of the lessons he learned from Jerry Cutter (now at Interplay) and John Cutter (now at Starwave) when working on his Hall of Fame member and Premier-winner Dynamix's Betrayal at Krondor. Feist felt that the award-winning game had too many mini-quests in the early going, which bogged down play and gave the impression of weak game design. Return to Krondor, stretching over nine chapters, will have a better sense of pacing where even the mini-quests will add to the sense of climax and will add an "A" routine to keep track of the player-character's actions and attitude.

7th Level: (800) 834-3863 or 412-434-1111

BETRAYAL AT ANTARA

The members of the design team of Sierra's BETRAYAL AT ANTARA consider their product to be a spiritual descendant of BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR. When Sierra realized the mistake they had made when the former president of their Dynamix subsidiary killed the Krondor sequel, higher management decided to create their own intellectual property. The Antara design team recognized that they couldn't use any of Feist's world, but they set out to create a world that they believed would make Feist proud. For example, instead of having the requisite orcs, trolls and elves of many post-Tolkien fantasy worlds, they developed cultures based on anthropomorphized life forms. BETRAYAL AT ANTARA, like RETURN TO KRONDOR, also uses a new 3D engine. It also uses the most unobtrusive interface we've seen yet in a CRPG. The interface only takes up about 1/3 of the screen when maximized (with the usual character portraits and color-coded graphs) and, most of the time sits minimized at the bottom of the screen so that you can get a full-screen view of the action. Unlike RETURN TO KRONDOR, BETRAYAL AT ANTARA will feature a disguised hex based tactical combat system. It is also a skill-based system in which characters can work on improving one-to-five skills at a time and an intricate magic system where characters can research spells by combining areas of knowledge.

Sierra, (800) 757-7707, Windows 95

features more detailed character generation (including advantages and disadvantages), richer conversational capacity, ability to



own/store/display object-oriented possessions, opportunity to join guilds, addition of lore and skill-based clues and activities, and option of customizing your on screen avatar

more than ever before (throughout the game as opposed to only at creation). If that weren't enough, Bethesda dipped into the TSR brain trust to find a producer that has made sure that even the mini-quests add to the experience rather than forcing you to assume the role of medieval Fed Ex courier.

Bethesda (301) 926-8300, Windows 95

LANDS OF LORE II: GUARDIANS OF DESTINY

LANDS OF LORE broke new ground for RPGs, and its sequel, GUARDIANS OF DESTINY, looks like it will do the same. With impressive 3D graphics and an intelligent gaming environment, GoD looks as if it might play more like an adventure game. As in the first LANDS OF LORE, players won't generate characters, instead, they take on the persona of Luther, a reluctant hero pressed into ridding the Lands of an evil curse. Though GoD is plot driven, the designers at



THE ELDER SCROLLS: DAGGERFALL

Of course, CRPG fans are still awaiting THE ELDER SCROLLS: DAGGERFALL from Bethesda. The sequel to the Premier-winning THE ELDER SCROLLS: ARENA features a smoother, faster 3D engine with plenty of special lighting and weather effects. It also

THE MOST ACCLAIMED GAME OF THE YEAR.



"An excellent, groundbreaking adventure game, setting a new standard for plot depth and realism."

— Mark Clarkson, Computer Gaming World



"One of the most ambitious and riveting PC games of its genre ever produced."

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— Glenn Broderick, Computer Player

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— Chris Clarke, CD-ROM Today

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— Shane Mooney, PC Games



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— John Sellers, Time Out NY

"Where has this been all my life?"

— William Webster,
Former Director of the C.I.A.

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— Scott Gohrs, Computer Game Review



Master the tools of the trade to track the trajectory of an assassin's bullet.



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ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

Westwood Studios are taking care not to reward or punish behavior; it's up to the player to provide personality for Luther, so there is no "right" way to complete the game. As Luther moves through the landscape, other characters will remember how he treats them and the plot will proceed accordingly. GoD promises to be a very good-looking, first person perspective RPG.

Virgin Interactive Entertainment (714) 833-8710, DOS

REALMS OF ARKANIA: SHADOWS OVER RIVA

Lovers of intricate role-playing systems are probably already familiar with Sir-Tech's REALMS OF ARKANIA: SHADOWS OVER RIVA. Based in the German role-playing universe, *Das Schwarze*

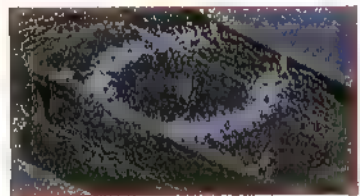
Auge (The Black Eye), the ARKANIA series features a 3D look and a rich, complex role playing system. The universe is very fleshed out, as readers of the novels just released by Prima's Proteus division (*The Charlatan* and *The Lioness*, reviewed on CGW's AOL edition) can attest. The universe has a unique pantheon, equalitarian attitude toward gender, and an intriguing mix of cultures to commend it. This incarnation also features a new tactical style of combat reminiscent of X-COM or the upcoming SUPER HEROES from MicroProse.

Sir-Tech (800) 447-1230 Operator 75, Windows 95

DIABLO

DIABLO, from the folks who brought you WARCRAFT 2, is a spiritual offspring of the ancient (in computer years) ROGUE game and its more recent descendent, SSI's DUNGEON HACK.

Gamers choose from three distinct character classes: fighters, archers and wizards. Then, they descend into a crypt and onward into a monster- and trap-laden



labyrinth. Like its predecessors, DIABLO features random dungeon construction and object/monster/trap placement so that you never play the same game twice. Add impressive 3D characters, light-sourcing, and special effects, as well as multiplayer play on a free Internet site, and you've got an irresistible combination. (See Sneak Preview, pg. 118.)

Blizzard (800) 953-SNOW, Windows 95

DUNGEON KEEPER

Previewed in CGW #137, DUNGEON KEEPER turns the tables on traditional role-playing and allows gamers to assume the role of the Ultimate Bad Guy. Gamers get to be dungeon archi-

ects, monster handlers, first-person fighters, resource managers, and, in at least one campaign, the destroyer of an ULTIMA-style avatar. The game is rife with wonderful multiplayer touches such as audio cues to indicate where the "good guys" are trying to dig their way into your dungeon, shadow-sourcing so that you can detect when those do-gooders are trying to sneak around corners, torture rooms where you can unleash your frustration on hapless foes to glean new info, and best of all, the ability to change every parameter in the game through an Excel spreadsheet.

Electronic Arts (800) 245-4525, Windows 95

DARK EARTH

DARK EARTH (previewed in our June issue) is an incredible new role-playing universe from Mindscape's development unit in France. A combination fantasy/science fiction game, DARK

EARTH puts you in the role of a Guardian of Fire—literally the tender of the flame that heats the entire urban structure (Stall te) where he lives and a combination fireman/police man. The graphics make much of the juxtaposition



of light vs. darkness, and the 3D sets are reminiscent of the illustrations for Jules Verne's novels or the sets of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. The culture is extremely robust and the game has a surprisingly agile combat system that comes close to some of the best fighting games on the market. Even the monsters are different in this game, since the design team avoided the classic monsters in favor of monstrosities mutated from the familiar flora and fauna of our world.

Mindscape (800) 601-7529, Windows 95


NEW DIMENSIONS FOR 1997

We're also looking forward to some games that will probably not arrive until '97. The most exciting from EA/Bullfrog looks like a fabulous superhero game: all heroes and villains engage in combat across the skies, over the rooftops, up the walls, and down the streets and alleys of a mega metropolis. Now player franchise Entertainment is working on *Stormfront*, a role-playing game set in a future created by Neal Stephenson, author of the cyberpunk classic, *Snow Crash*. The game is anticipated as a '97 release. Another '97 release, New World Computing's newest *Might and Magic* game will also feature a new 3D engine with light-sourcing and beautiful texture maps...Mindscape, not previously known for role-playing, has staked out intriguing new ground in its '97 CRPG. Right now, we can't tell you anything more than its title, *SIEGE OF STORMHAVEN*, but the early design concepts are definitely intriguing.



nd on the 8th day,
He split to Maui.





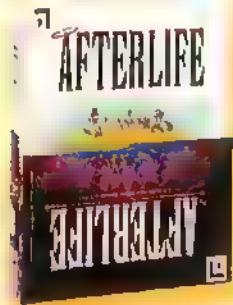
Don't forget
to feed the fish.





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WINDOWS 95, DOS AND MACINTOSH CD-ROM

Welcome to Afterlife. The first world-building simulation that lets you manage two prime planes of "unreal estate"—heaven and hell—simultaneously. Possessed of an unearthly sense of humor, it all begins in a God-knows-where galaxy. There, billions of departed souls hunger for you to give them what they deserve.

Start with the Pearly Gates of Heaven or the Fiery Gates of Hell, zone in blocks of deadlly Sims or goodly Virtues and build some roads. Soon, the dearly departed arrive in droves.

Keep them happy and you flourish.

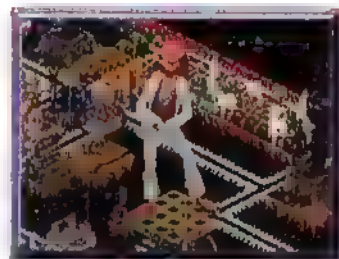
Lose too many along the way and it's a visit from the Four Surfers of the Apocalypso (not a good time). Factor in a half-dozen or so disasters (not including total annihilation), money problems, lost souls, headaches on the planet below, and things get complicated in a hurry.

With over 200 artistically rendered rewards, nearly 300 detailed tiles and buildings, more maps, graphs and charts than you can shake a pitchfork at, plus the most sophisticated engine of any sim game beginning with the letter "A," you've got infinite hours of game-play.

Afterlife: Reach the end or die trying.



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chain up to four SlaveWinches together. The SlaveWinches will also support "hot-swapping," which will hopefully eliminate the need to reboot each time controllers are swapped or added to the daisy chain. Guessed retail price: about \$39.

Microsoft (243) 882-8000

The new 16-bit, 32-bit and 64-bit
 processors are available in a wide
 range of configurations to suit
 your needs. The 16-bit processor
 is available in a single-chip
 package, or in a multi-chip
 package. The 32-bit processor
 is available in a single-chip
 package, or in a multi-chip
 package. The 64-bit processor
 is available in a single-chip
 package, or in a multi-chip
 package.

Thrustmaster took top honors at E3 in the Most Absurd Tradeshow Chatchka category with boxer shorts underwear bearing their name. In a more serious moment, Thrustmaster teamed up with Cybernet to build a force feedback driving wheel that ships in October. The controller, as yet unnamed, will be priced under \$200 and should make the ride on driving games a lot bumpier.

Thrustmaster (503) 639-3200

First Person Gaming (FPG) is a new kid on the block headed by a former Logitech joystick designer. FPG's first controller the Assassin, looks like a track-ball mouse, but when used with a joystick, lets you "free-look" in first person shoot 'em ups like Duke NUKEM 3D. Free-looking is important in 3D games with six degrees of freedom (up/down, forward/backward, left/right), because you're dealing with unfriendlies on different levels above and below.

Your joystick plugs into the digital Assassin, which in turn connects to your joystick port. The Assassin controls up/down and left/right movement, while the joystick handles forward/backward and strafe

CH has established itself as one of the best stick makers for flight jockeys and rootin'-tootin' shooters. Now CH has a force feedback joystick in the works called the Force F/X, which should be shipping sometime in September. The Force F/X will have support for five kinds of programmable feedback: Jo!l simulates collisions or vehicle feedback, like lowering and landing gear. Jo!l Bullon Reflex will provide feedback similar to weapon recoil. Vibration (X&Y) will mimic driving over a rough road surface, or a vehicle engine revving. Buffeting will simulate airplane turbulence and explosions. And lastly, Vector Force will give feedback similar to a G force pull in tight car turns.

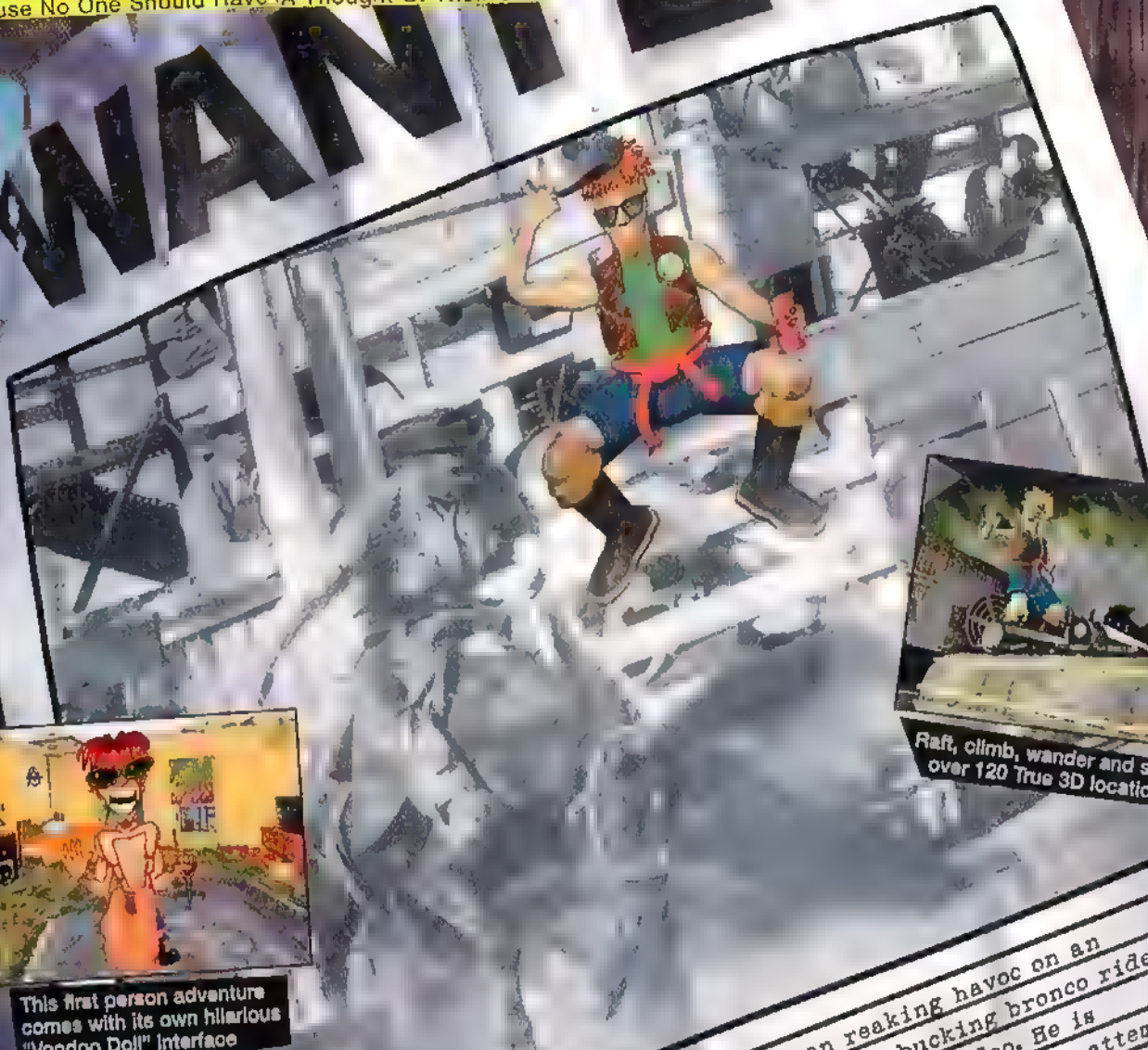
CH Products, (619) 598-2518



NORMALITY

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WANTED



This first person adventure comes with its own hilarious "Voodoo Doll" interface



Raft, climb, wander and scour over 120 True 3D locations



Wildly twisted puzzles offering hours of raging 3D adventures

Protecting the Normal Community



District #13

Suspect Name: "Kent"

Sex: male

Height: 5' 9"

Weight: 167 lbs

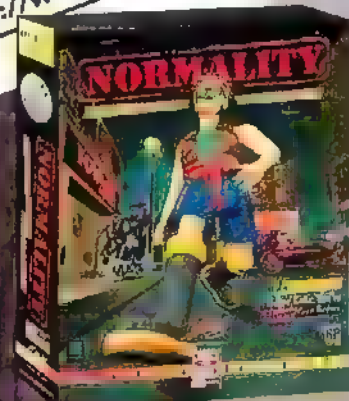
Eyes: Under Sunglasses

Hair: Flaming Red

Age: 20-Something

Last seen reaking havoc on an unsuspecting bucking bronco rider during a normal rodeo. He is extremely abnormal and no attempt should be made to subdue the suspect. If you see him, Contact the Norm Police and let them do the hog-tying, they're good at it.

The Normality Police Can Be Contacted At: <http://www.interplay.com>



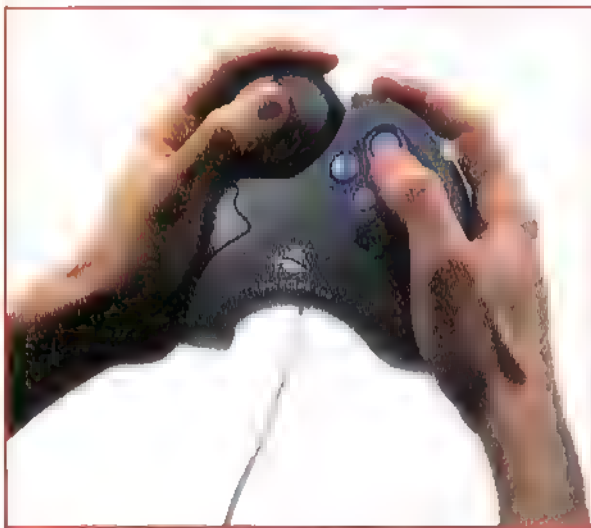
left/right controls. The device currently supports Duke Nukem, Doom II, Hexen, Descent II and MechWarrior 2. FPG is also working on a Quake driver that should be ready when the unit ships in August. In addition to drivers for DOS titles, the Assassin will also have DirectInput support for Windows 95 games as well. Street price is slated to be about \$99.

First Person Gaming, (510) 264-9577

SPACETEC SPACEORB-360

We've seen a lot of devices touted as the ideal 3D game controller, but this is one design that actually works pretty well. It offers common sense control input for 3D games like Descent II with a pressure-sensitive ball attached to a console-style controller. Based on Spacetec's earlier Spaceball Avenger I, the new controller seems to have overcome the Avenger's awkward design and prohibitive price.

By moving the SpaceOrb's flexible control ball with your left hand,



you can move forward/backward, look up, down, or side to side, strafe, jump, squat, pitch or roll. The digital device supports six-axes of control, so these moves can be combined to do nasty things, like circling an opponent in Duke Nukem while continuously firing at him. The right-hand part of the controller has six buttons for shooting, punching, opening doors, etc.

According to Spacetec, the SpaceOrb supports Doom II, Descent, Descent II, Duke Nukem 3D, Hexen, Heretic, MechWarrior2, Quake and others. It reportedly works with Windows 95 games, using either the standard Microsoft joystick driver or through a SpaceWare optimized game driver. It is also supposed to be compatible with any 2D or 3D game that supports a mouse.

The SpaceOrb should be out by the time you read this, for approximately \$85 street price.

Spacetec IMC, (508) 970-0330.

NEC POWERPLAYER 2000/2001

NEC's first gaming rig made a fairly respectable showing in our Ultimate Gaming Machine feature earlier this year. NEC is now coming out with a hell-bent-for-gaming rig called the PowerPlayer, which should be shipping by the time you read this. If specs are any indicator, this one should pack a wallop, with a 166 or 200 MHz Pentium CPU, 32 MB of EDO RAM, a 256 KB synchronous pipeline burst L2 cache, 2 GB hard-drive, NEC's 4x6x CD-ROM drive (a 6x drive that holds four CD ROMs), ThrustMaster Flight Control System joystick, Advent AV370 speakers, and Yamaha audio system. What's really noteworthy about this system is its graphics subsystems. Out of the box, the PowerPlayer comes with an ATI Xpression 3D board for 2D and DOS graphics, and a board based on 3dfx's smokin' Voodoo chip to handle the 3D graphics. This venerable combination should make all your graphics boogie, especially Direct3D-based action titles that we should be seeing by year's end. The PowerPlayer is supposed to ship with a full payload of games, though the bundled titles have not yet been decided.

Perhaps the most interesting spec on this system is its price: about \$4000 with a 17-in. NEC monitor. The PowerPlayer should be shipping in late August, and we'll take a first look in the September issue to tell you what we find.

NEC, (415) 528-6000

3D GRAPHICS: FOLLOW THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD

It's time to follow the yellow brick road to 3D graphics. In this section, we'll take a look at the latest in 3D graphics hardware and software. We'll start with a look at the latest in 3D graphics hardware, including the new 3D cards from 3dfx, ATI, and NVIDIA. We'll then look at the latest in 3D software, including the new 3D games from id Software, Epic Games, and others. Finally, we'll look at the latest in 3D graphics peripherals, including the new 3D mice and joysticks from Logitech and others.

The ColorWare's 3D graphics card is based on S8's VRGE part. See our review of Diamond's Stealth 3D card, and Hercules' Terminator 3D in this issue, page 106.

ATI's Xpression 3D is shipping as well, with an accelerated version of MechWarrior 2. Look for our review of the ATI board in the September issue.

Meanwhile, computer manufacturers who don't want to be left behind are weighing in with 3D card-equipped models. In addition to NEC (above), Compaq has announced that it will be featuring the NEC/Videologic PowerVR 3D chip in a version of their Presario rig, which will ship sometime this fall.



"THE BEST ANIMATION WE'VE EVER SEEN ON A PC."

-Computer Gaming World

"BREATHTAKING...THE BEST 3-D STUDIO RENDERED
VISUALS EVER CREATED."

-Next Generation

"YOU JUST HAVE TO SEE IT TO BELIEVE IT."

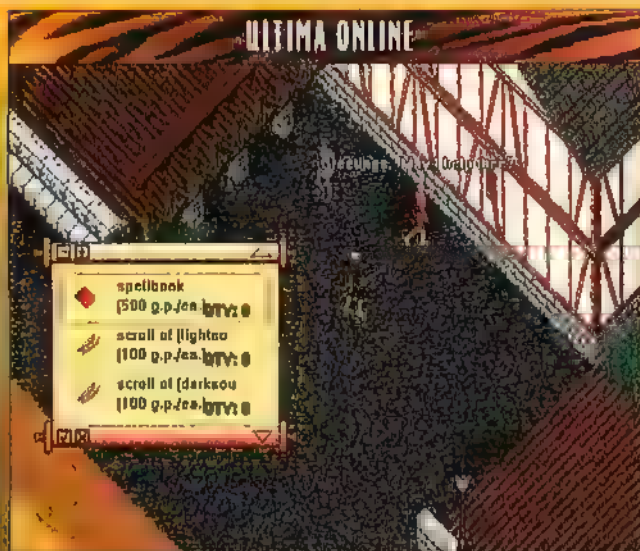
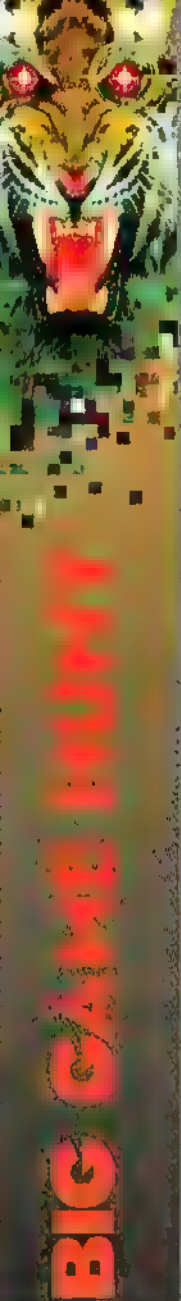
-Strategy Plus

COMING SOON

For PC CD-ROM, MAC CD-ROM, Sega Saturn.
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ONLINE GAMES



Britannia, the tiled setting of Lord British's landmark Ultima series, has become a living, changing kingdom in cyberspace. In *ULTIMA ONLINE*, gamers will assume characters within a medieval fantasy kingdom. The size of Britannia itself is expected to be larger than the combination of maps for all of the previous Ultimas combined.

The graphics use the oblique overhead perspective associated with

Ultima. From each other. In fact, during beta testing, an informal "thieves' Guild" was formed.

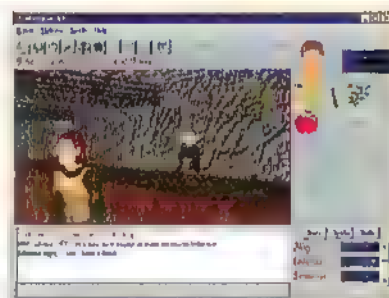
Now, the beta is limited to around 150 people at a time, and will feature many types of quests, including a "source quest." The former will be storylines designed by William At Origin. The latter will be determined by what characters do with the virtual resources of Britannia. For example, Lord British postulates that dragons tend to dine on cattle and sheep, since they are much faster and easier to kill than humans. But should the virtual humans of certain areas within Britannia decide to deplete their livestock too much, it could be that they'll see incursions against the towns by human-devouring dragons. Naturally, this is likely to incite a dragon hunt. In this way, the world will be shaped by both closed-ended and open-ended plots.

Origin, www.origin.com, Windows 95

MERIDIAN 59

Like *ULTIMA ONLINE*, 3DO's *MERIDIAN 59* is designed to be a dynamic universe. A fantasy realm where on-screen characters can buy, sell, trade, cheat, and steal from each other, *MERIDIAN 59* has become a fascinating sociological study. Some characters have elected to follow the dark side and prey upon other characters as denizen of the virtual underworld, while others have built impromptu guilds of bodyguards, and still others have

become cyber-bankers. You maneuver through the environment using the arrow keys and chat with other characters using a chat line. In many ways, *Meridian* seems like a cross between Simultron's



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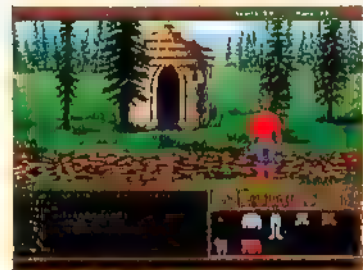
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GEMSTONE III and VOR Technologies' THE DRAGON'S TALE since it uses a command line like GEMSTONE and allows you to navigate through a 3D graphics window like THE DRAGON'S TALE.

3DO, www.3do.com, Windows 95

THE REALM

THE REALM is Sierra's multiplayer role-playing game on the Internet. Though the game looks like merely a slicker version of the standard Sierra graphic adventure, it is significantly more open-ended than that. You select the name and character class of your character from a typical fantasy assortment. Then, you create the look of your character as with INN's avatar creation and adjust your attribute points in typical CRPG manner



prior to play. Once you arrive in the land, you have to locate shops where you can buy clothing, armor, weapons and food. Then, you are liable to stumble across combat and get wasted

before you know it. Fortunately, you can be resurrected as easily as you can with a generous Dungeon Master in a face-to-face game. Of course, that may be simply because the game is in beta test on the web at the present time.

Sierra, <http://www.sierra.com>, Windows 95

AIR WARRIOR

The great granddaddy of graphic multiplayer games has had reconstructive surgery rivaling that of the six million dollar man. The latest AIR WARRIOR has SVGA graphics, new cockpits for the British, German and U.S. WWII vintage air-

craft you normally fly online play (as well as new cockpits for the WWI and Korean era missions you can fly solo). The software will even be available in an enhanced format (with more than 100 additional solo missions) to be published by Interactive Magic as AIR WARRIOR II. Online, AIR WARRIOR allows you to choose aircraft from one of the three main combatants in the European theater of war and join a squadron of other virtual pilots in dogfights, escort missions, bombing runs and more. If you're currently on AOL, you can get into and jump right to the game with Keyword: Kesmai. You can also access the game from CompuServe using this month's CG-ROM software.

Kesmai, www.kesmai.com, Windows, DOS



BATTLETECH: SOLARIS

The main problem with the original and award winning MULTIPLAYER BATTLETECH, as it appeared on GENie, was that the FASA universe was too spread out. It was often hard to find where the action was and to get your mechs (the giant robots from the original MECHWARRIOR) to the right planet

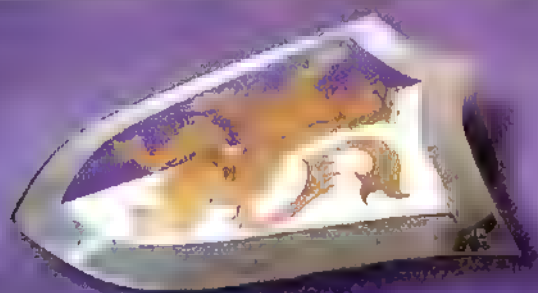


before the battles were over and the other human combatants had logged off. Further, it was always human mech pilots versus AI mech pilots. Now, all of the action takes place on one planet: Solaris (the

HEROES II

of Might and Magic

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BIG GAME HUNT

ONLINE GAMES

gaming/gladiatorial planet where Justin Allard became the premier gladiator Justin Xiang in Michael Stackpole's *Warrior* series of novels). Now, it's teams of human pilots versus human pilots in a variety of missions.

Kesmai, www.kesmai.com, Windows, DOS

CASTLE INFINITY

What if dinosaurs weren't really extinct? What if they avoided their post-meteorite demise by holing up in a castle in another dimension? What if they wandered about singing, wearing maroon fezes, and fighting the monsters from that dimension which threatened their survival? What if ordinary kids could find that dimension via cyberspace and help those dinosaurs against the monsters? What if ordinary kids could coop-



erate with each other in helping the cute, cuddly dinosaurs? What if they occasionally learned something when they helped the dinosaurs? That's what you have in **CASTLE INFINITY**, Starwave's latest venture

into web-based entertainment. The game uses a videogame-style interface and combines animated cartoons (on a CD ROM published every six months or so) with game action via the web. Even technical difficulties can be fun in **CASTLE INFINITY** because the program is set up so that should a child accidentally get disconnected, a cartoon plays while the modem redials.

Starwave, www.starwave.com, Windows 95.

ONLINE EXPECTATIONS

Some of the most exciting developments in the world of online gaming are happening right now. In the past, online games were limited to text-based adventures or simple strategy games. But now, with the advent of 3D graphics and networked multiplayer, the possibilities are endless. One of the most promising areas is the development of online role-playing games (RPGs). These games allow players to create a character and embark on a journey, often with other players, to complete quests and defeat monsters. The potential for social interaction and immersion in these games is huge. Another area of interest is the development of online strategy games. These games often involve building a base, gathering resources, and fighting other players in a competitive environment. The complexity and depth of these games can be immense. Finally, there's the rise of online action games. These games typically feature fast-paced combat and a focus on reflexes and coordination. The variety of online games available today is truly remarkable, and the future looks bright for this exciting medium.

Finally, Kesmai has just begun work on *Alien vs. Predator*. This multiplayer game will let you play either a space marine, Alien, or Predator. It appears that much of the work is being done by the folks who did the graphics for the Jaguar version (the best product on that system).

"Strategy Game Of The Year"

-Computer Gaming World

"Turn Based Strategy Game Of The Year"

-Computer Games Strategy Plus

"Get this game, it's a classic"

-Wade Glasscock

"It's one of the BEST strategy games
I've ever played"

-Mark Asher

"Heroes of Might and Magic is an excellent game"

-Tony Damiani

"It's great, wonderful, long term play value
(Win 95 version), and highly addicting"

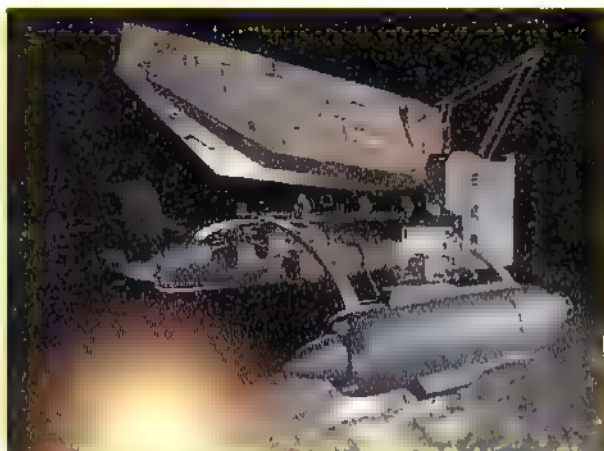
-Barbara Christensen

"An excellent and entertaining game"

-Darrin Fesperman

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Both Blizzard's role-playing game, *DIABLO*, and real-time strategy title, *STARCRAFT*, are being designed with multi-player gaming in mind. In addition to modem, direct link and IPX network support, Blizzard will allow players to compete online with their free Internet gaming service, battle.net. Battle.net, set to go live in September, will include arenas for players to chat and challenge each other in either *DIABLO* or *STARCRAFT*. (Unfortunately, battle.net will not be backward-compatible with *WARCRAFT II*, but every multiplayer title after *STARCRAFT* will have battle.net support.) The best part is, Blizzard will charge no hourly, monthly, or startup fees. To reach the Internet site, both games will have a battle.net option built into their main menus. If you've got a modem and on-line service provider, just click on the battle.net button to jump onto the service.



Once connected, players will be able to compete against others of similar ability, because the service segregates arenas by skill level. Battle.net will be accessible 24 hours a day to gamers throughout the world.

Blizzard Entertainment, www.blizzard.com; both titles Windows 95

DIAL IN, LOCK ON, BLOW AWAY

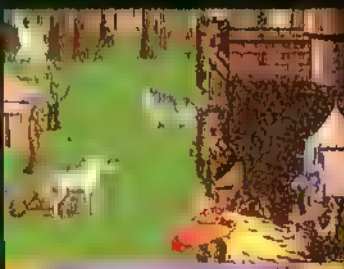
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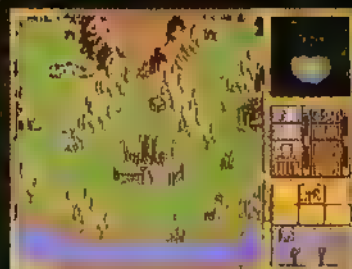
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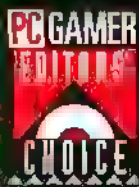


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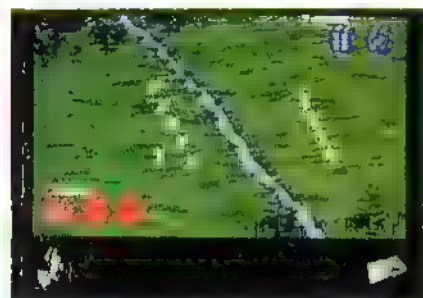


If it seems that the CHESSMASTER line has been with us since the prehistoric times of computing, that's more fact than myth. However, the latest in the award-winning series hardly tries to rest on its predecessors' laurels. The computer opponents—always a CHESSMASTER strength—this year represent playing styles of Grandmasters from the nearly forgotten

the wide range of opponents; Internet play; the vastly improved analysis functions (you can import data from Chessbase, for example); and the wide range of teaching tools, it would be hard indeed to find a more comprehensive and enjoyable chess package.

Mindscape, (800) 234-3030, Windows/Win95

giants of the 19th century to the latest kingside stars, all painstakingly researched by GM Eric Schiller. If your only interest is in learning the game, you might prefer MAURICE ASHLEY TEACHES CHESS. But given



rates fleets and castles from *Castle Risk*, and all versions (both the original French and the newer North American rules are supported) will be playable over modem. Light, enjoyable and addictive fun.

Hasbro Interactive, (508) 921-3700, Win95



The biggest surprise of this genre, the old kids' fave has moved strongly into gaming adolescence. In addition to the tame "B-6, hit!" of the original, the advanced version lets you—don't faint and fall into the

YOU DON'T KNOW JACK: SPORTS

Are tennis racquet slings made of: 1) catgut, 2) monofilament nylon; 3) leftover strands of Andre Agassi's fake hair? Regardless of how you might answer, Berkeley shoots and scores with this one. The follow up to our Premier Award Winner for best Puzzle/Classics game promises to skewer legendary sports figures with the same fresh irreverence as the original—and hopefully more questions this time around. You have to wonder why those myth-meisters at ESPN didn't think of it first. Our win, their loss.

Berkeley Systems, (510) 540-5535, Windows/Mac

MONTY PYTHON & THE HOLY GRAIL

Although we are the Editors Who Very Often Say Silly Things, we would be remiss if we didn't taunt you again with this fine puzzle game. For the full scoop, see the Puzzles/Classics column on page 157 7th Level, (214) 437-4858, Win95



RISK!

One of the great parlor games finally gets the royal treatment, a la Monopoly. The version we saw featured a solid AI (unlike previous computer attempts) and some very crisp, miniatures-style graphics for the battles. The advanced game incorpo-

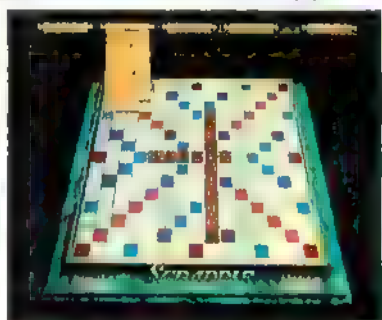
ocean—move your fleet, perform searches with radar/sonar, and even shoot torpedoes from hidden submarines. Being able to launch cruise missiles over the Internet gives "You sunk my battleship!" a whole new sense of fun.

Hasbro Interactive, (508) 921-3700, Win95

SCRABBLE

If you're looking for new ways to describe how Hasbro Interactive is attempting to dominate the Classic arm of the industry you can probably find those words in Scrabble. The accessibility of this classic game is enhanced by the elegant graphic look, and by the ability to design your own custom dictionary. Playable by wordsmiths, linguists, or just those who enjoy spelling "kleptomaniacal," this could be the sleeper hit of the year.

Hasbro Interactive, (508) 921-3700, Win95



OTHER PUZZLE PIECES

Davidson looks to follow up its MAURICE ASHLEY TEACHES CHESS success with Extreme Chess, while Interplay counters with USCF Chess (endorsed by the U.S. Chess Federation, of course). Hasbro Interactive's ambitious schedule will also include computer versions of Othello and Yahtzee. Roll those dice!

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F-22 LIGHTNING II



The Lockheed Lightning II is promising to soon become as ubiquitous as the F-16 Fighting Falcon in the sim world. Helping this trend along will be Novalogic, with F-22

an authentic F-22 cockpit and instruments. You Novalogic worked with Lockheed to accurately model the plane's performance and instrumentation.

Although F-22 promises to be a more "serious" sim than previous Novalogic efforts, expect some compromises in the name of gameplay. In the preliminary multiplayer mode we played, for instance, your plane is simply disabled for a period of time after being "destroyed," saving you the long flight back to the battlefield. The terrain model is reminiscent of EF2000, but has a richer color palette and changes with the seasons. The texture-mapped aircraft

are among the best looking we've ever seen. Look for the full action in next month's COW.

Novalogic; (800) 858-1322; Win 95

TFX 3: LIGHTNING STRIKE

TFX 3 builds on the foundation of Ocean/DID's EF2000, but this sequel puts you in the cockpit of the ubiquitous F-22.

The new version of the WarGen dynamic campaign generator promises multiple scenarios and changing political and tactical alliances. Sim plots will now be given full control of mission planning, as well as the ability to man an AWACS control screen to direct air-

craft and evaluate the tactical situation.

DID's researching many of the advanced systems

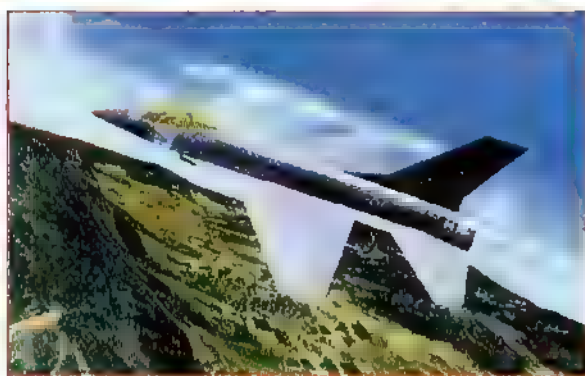


under consideration for inclusion in the EF2000's cockpit, which should lead to a very user-friendly control environment without sacrificing realism. The aircraft are now texture-mapped, and the terrain looks even better here than in EF2000, thanks to enhancements such as dynamic lighting and shadowing that changes as time passes. Desert missions should be a little less gloomy than the fjords of the first game, and there's more of an emphasis on maritime warfare here. Serial and modem play will be included, and net play should support more than eight human pilots. TFX 3 should arrive this winter.

Ocean/DID; (800) 289-1411; Win 95

FALCON 4.0

The much-awaited FALCON 4.0 may finally be coalescing from the vapor. At the recent E3 show, an early demo version of this F-16C Block 50 sim featured some amazing FLIGHT UNLIMITED style digitized terrain graphics and head-to-head play. What we saw was more a technology demo than even an Alpha version, however.



The flight model promises to be as impressive to today's fliers as FALCON 3.0's was six years ago. Cockpit systems have been fine-tuned to better compensate for the limitations of a computer monitor; along with the traditional full instrument panel, you can fly with just the HUD and superimposed MFD displays. The avionics are much more advanced, with new details such as HARM targeting systems. At this point it looks like the original FALCON 3.0 padlock view may give way to a BACK TO BAGHDAD-style floating target box, a move sure to upset FALCON purists.

FALCON 4.0's designers plan to model a million square miles of Korean terrain. Although the very early demo we saw showed obvious texture-map tiling, the overall effect was dazzling, especially on the version that took advantage of the 3DFX graphics board. You should have more control over resources in the air and on the ground here. MicroProse promises significant enhancements in multiplayer play. The one promise the company won't make is a ship date—first half of 1997 is as close as it will commit.

MicroProse; (800) 879-PLAY; Win 95

EUROPEAN AIR WAR

The upcoming EUROPEAN AIR WAR will be a welcome respite to the recent drought of historic flight sims. This sequel to 1942: THE PACIFIC AIR is reminiscent of its predecessor in



structure and general feel, but the improved SVGA simulation engine does a much better job of pulling you in to the experience. Along with the improved terrain and aircraft, the cockpit instrumentation is now much more readable—it should now be useable even in virtual cockpit mode.

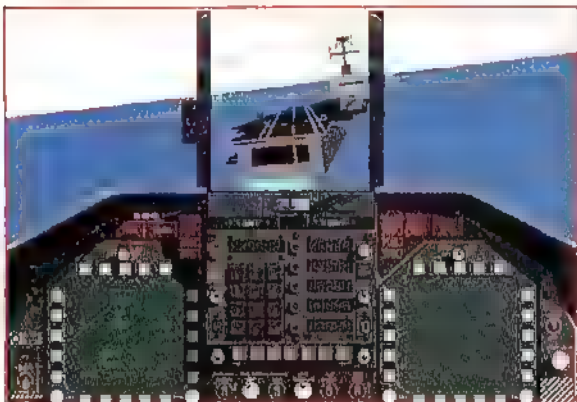
As with its predecessor, you'll be able to fly over 20 fighter and attack aircraft, but bombers are off-limits. Depending on which side you choose to fly for, you'll escort or attack formations of B-17s as the Allies inch into German territory. Up to 32 planes will be in the air at once, a big improvement over earlier sims, but only a taste of the action that occurred in the gigantic WW II bomber formations. A mission film recorder will allow you to review your performance.

MicroProse; (800) 879-PLAY; MS-DOS

EVA-18-NORNET 2.0

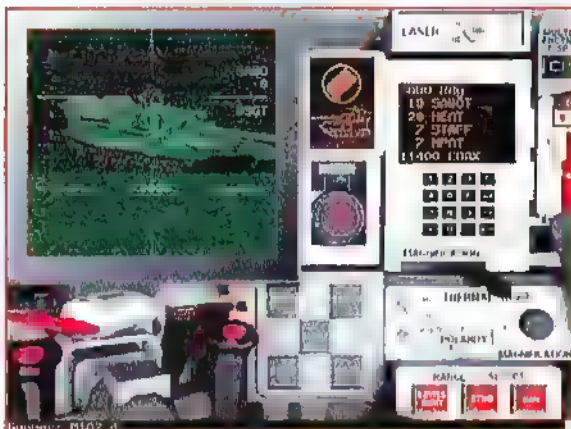
The popular Mac simulation will come to Win 95 in early fall with a number of enhancements. These include a highly accurate force-vector flight model and improved graphics, with support for resolutions up to 1024x768. You'll fly carrier and land-based fighter and attack missions in the Navy and Marines' premier strike fighter, against a variety of targets in three theaters of operation. If you're not too good at hitting ground targets, you can always drop one of the available nuclear weapons. However, a more civil response would be to take advantage of F/A-18 HORNET 2.0's classroom training guide, designed by an active duty Naval aviator.

Graphic Simulations. (214) 386-7575: Win 95



M1A2 ABRAMS

Ever notice how in a lot of modern-era games, technology for the bad guys stops around 1990, while all the cool U.S. equipment is readily available? Well, such isn't the case here, as designer Arnold Hendrick (co-designer with Sid Meier of several classic MicroProse games) has done his homework to include all the latest Ukrainian, Russian, and other former Soviet Bloc weaponry. The flashpoints include the U.S. intervening in a Russian/Ukrainian conflict, as well as fighting in the Middle East, with scenarios tied together by a branching campaign. All the high-tech toys you expect are included for these armored behemoths: infrared sights, wire-guided anti-tank missiles, even BMPs and the occasional infantry squad. The views from the tank were still pretty rough at press time, but at least you can tell a tree from a tank at 100 yards (unlike, say, *ARMORED FIST*).



Overall, this is a game that prizes substance over style. If you're tired of blowing the dust off that old copy of M1 TANK PLATOON, this new tank sim might just re-align your treads.

Interactive Magic: (919) 461-0722; Win 95

ALSO IN THE WORKS

1. The first part of the film is a historical overview of the mission system in California, showing the impact of the missionaries on the native population. It includes a map of California and a timeline of the mission period.

STAR TREK: STARFLEET ACADEMY



Finally, a game that lets us play out where we've been waiting to go the whole time, on an interstellar journey in the command chair of the Starship Enterprise. Actually, *Starfleet Academy* puts you at the helm of an *Enterprise* simulator as you work through 27 missions that include battles, diplomacy, and the fabled "no-win scenario," the *Kobyashi Maru*. William

Shatner, George Takei, and Walter Koenig reprise their roles as Kirk, Sulu, and Chekov and act as your Academy instructors.

Portions of the game take place on the ground at the Academy, where you'll interact with other cadets and deal with academy internal politics and probably a mystery or two. But the real action takes place on the bridge, where you'll command your crew in diplomatic and research missions, as well as in combat scenarios against 30 different types of starships. The combat looks ruder to the *Star Trek* "battle-ship-que" style rather than the gooly crosshair-based phaser wars found in earlier Interplay *Trek* games.

Even more exciting is the network play mode, basically a starship vs. starship melee. Take the helm of the *Enterprise*, a Romulan Bird of Prey, a Klingon battlecruiser, as well as Tapani, Trolan, and other ships in space combat. Beautiful light-sourced polygon graphics will add to the pleasure of photon-torpedoing your enemies to death. This game will hopefully beam in before Christmas.

Interplay: (714) 353-9854; MS-DOS, Win 35, Power Mac, Playstation.

X-WING VS. TIE FIGHTER

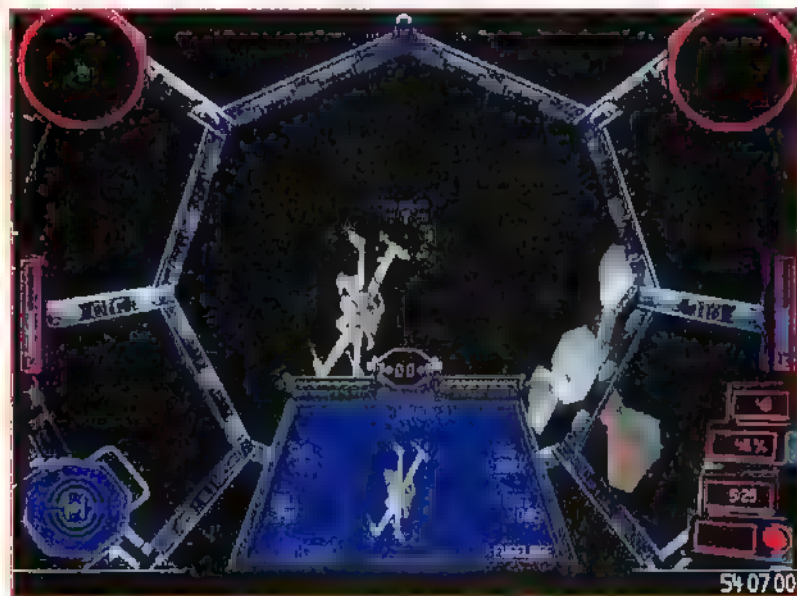
Either you loved *Tie Fighter* and *X-Wing* so much that you've played the games and the mission disks all the way through, or you quickly tired of the Lemmings-like puzzle elements of the popular space sims. Either way, you're itching for a new and different *Star Wars* experience. *X-Wing vs. Tie Fighter* should fit the bill, no matter which camp you're from, because this multiplayer entry in the *Star Wars* series lets you engage real human players in

space dogfights. Both modem and net play will be possible, there are also some solo missions designed primarily as practice for the multiplayer action.

You can fly for Imperial, Rebel, or Pirate teams, and you'll have over a dozen kinds of starfighters to choose from. If your side is short on players, you can command multiple computer-down wingmen (and jump into their cockpits if your own ship is destroyed).

An enhanced graphics engine adds texture maps taken directly from Lucasfilm's *Star Wars* archive to the ships, dramatically enhancing the look of this fall, 1996 game.

LucasArts, (800) 98-LUCAS; MS-DOS



MECHWARRIOR 2: MERCENARIES

Actually a prequel to the original, *MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries* takes place 18 years earlier. As Inner Sphere Mechwarriors, you're in the game not for loyalty and honor, but for money, fame, and power. As a gun (or LRM) for hire, you'll work to earn C-Bills to build new Mechs, hire additional pilots to assist you in future missions, and pay for ammo, technicians and repairs.

If money's tight, *Mercenaries* borrows a page from Sierra's *EarthSiege 2* and allows you to salvage parts from damaged Mechs from the battlefield and use them for your own repairs and enhancements.



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—Jim Seymour, PC Magazine

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- MS Plus Pack
- MS Cinemania® '96
- MS Works 95
- Launch Magazine
- Quicken® SE (available only in the U.S.)
- Harman Interactive SmartTV™ Programming Guide

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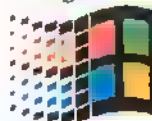
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The enhanced graphics engine features texture-mapped mechs, and the Win95 version will use Direct3D to further enhance the graphic environment. **Activision; (310) 473-9200; MS-DOS and Win 95**

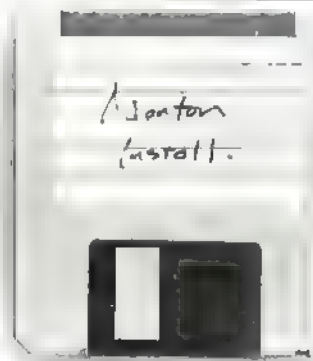


PRIVATEER: THE DARKENING

This isn't PRIVATEER 2, which is still in the works, but rather an all-new European sequel to Origin's original trade-and-combat space game. Although the game starts with the incredibly overused "you're starting the game with amnesia and going on a voyage of self discovery" plot, THE DARKENING actually looks promising. The video sequences star the creepy Christopher Walken, along with John Hurt and David Warner.

As usual, you'll need to bring in cash as a legit cargo hauler, scout, bounty hunter, courier, etc., to finance your adventures. This time you're not flying the cargo ships, but rather escorting them in hot new fighter designs. Up to 18 different ships and a wide variety of add-ons should keep things interesting. The SVGA space combat engine was one of the most impressive we saw at the recent E3 show.

Origin; (512) 424-6620; MS-DOS



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Any time you see a group of journalists drop their usual cynicism and go into full-blown geekwhiz mode, you know you've got something hot on your hands. That's exactly what happened at E3 this May, when we saw a preview of Electronic Arts' upcoming **NHL Hockey 97**. EA already set a new standard for hockey games with the '96 version, but happily they're not letting this title get fat and lazy on the players' bench. Instead, the '97 version constitutes a major graphic facelift, with awesome realistic 3D polygonal players based on motion-captured moves from Tom Pederson of the San Jose Sharks. If you think you've played a good-looking hockey game already, just wait until you've been body-checked by Claude Lemieux in this game, with his name and number clearly visible on his back. In terms of gameplay, six types of checking, variable slapshot speed, as well as modem and LAN play will all be icing on the cake. This is our must-have sports pick of the season! **Electronic Arts, (415) 571-7171, MS-DOS**

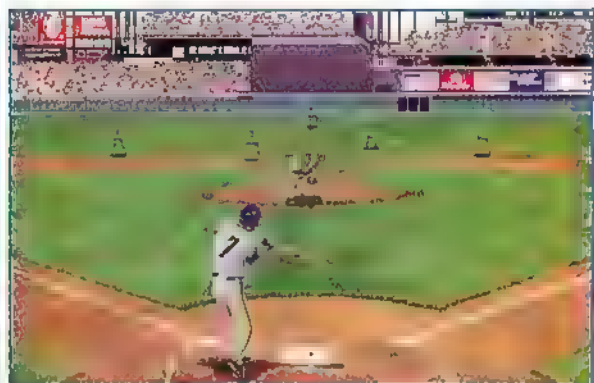
NFL LEGENDS 97

This ambitious new title from Accolade boasts the freshest premise of any computer football game in years—letting you take virtually any player or team in NFL history and place them in any one of four eras: 1932, 1950, 1968 and 1996. With a humongous array of statistics and faithful adherence to the rules of each era, **NFL LEGENDS** lets fantasy football freaks go wild. How would the '68 Packers match up against the '96 Cowboys? And how would both teams do if forced to play under 1932 rules, when there were no separate offensive and defensive units? Customizable playbooks, variable weather and field conditions, and trading options all contribute to the game's impressive strategic richness. Beautiful SVGA graphics and solid gameplay should keep action fans satisfied as well.

Accolade, (408) 985-1700, Windows 95

FRONT PAGE SPORTS BASEBALL PRO 96

This new Windows 95 version is Sierra's first update of their venerable FPS baseball franchise in two years, and it looks like it was worth the wait. As in previous versions, gamers can choose to play in an arcade, managerial or career mode—the lat-



ter giving you the ability to track players' performance over their entire career up through retirement. The new version includes realistic 3D models of every current major-league stadium, while the action on the field incorporates the same great looking, high res, motion-captured animation found in FPS Pro Football 96. Overall, the game promises a nice balance between arcade action and stat-based strategy.

Sierra, (800) 757-7707, Windows 95

ABC'S MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL

Yes, the television institution that's been destroying marriages for years is now making its way to the computer screen. This is the first release from OverTime (OT) Sports—but don't expect a scrawny rookie. OT Sports is a division of Capita Cities/ABC Inc., itself a subsidiary of Disney, and you can tell that the money is there. The game will be hosted by real-life broadcasters Al Michaels, Frank Gifford and Dan Dierdorf, with extra commentary by Lynn Swann and the loveable Brent



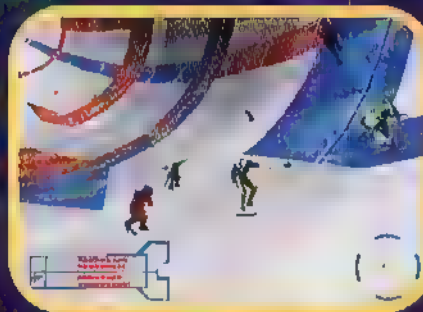
Musburger. Nine TV camera angles and on-field mikes will help simulate the look and feel of a television broadcast. All 30 NFL teams with their stadiums and 1996 rosters will be in the game, which will feature motion-captured 3D polygonal players. Along with all the glitz, the gameplay looks promising, with editable playbooks, weekly downloadable stats and more. One problem we foresee: all but one of the six players used for the motion-capture were from the AFC. So though your team may look realistic, don't plan on winning the Super Bowl any time soon.

OT Sports, (410) 771-8550, Windows 95

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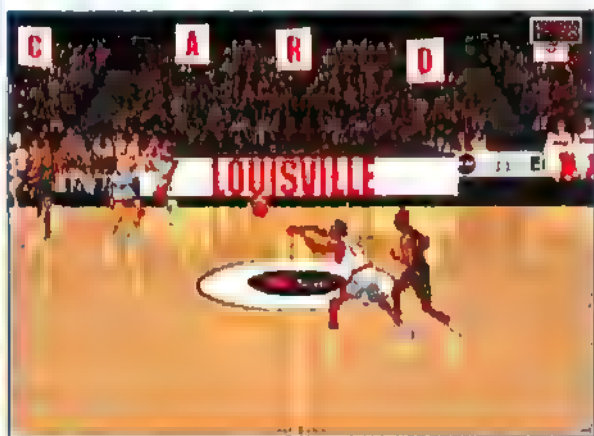
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NCAA CHAMPIONSHIP BASKETBALL

NBA players may make the big money, but everyone knows that the real, pure basketball action happens on the college level—especially these days. GTE's NCAA CHAMPIONSHIP BASKETBALL looks like a winner that will bring some much-needed college hoops action to the PC. The game will include 64 Division I teams along with their home courts, colors and even mascots. More importantly, the statistical mode of each team is based on each college's hoop history as well as the playing style of the current coaches. We especially like the recruiting aspect of the game: pre-season



action lets you study all the top prospects and compete against other coaches for recruitment. Based on the player's desires and your school's program, you may or may not succeed in attracting the talent you want. Once you have your team together, you can track players' development over the course of their college career. No word yet on whether your best players will leave for the NBA after their freshman or sophomore year—now *that* would be realism.

GTE Entertainment, (619) 431-8801, MS-DOS

MADDEN NFL 97

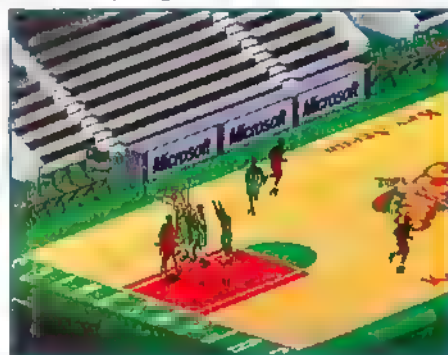
Well, we included this game in last year's fall preview, when it had a '96 moniker, and again in last year's holiday issue, but EA fumbled the release. Now it's been renamed for '97, and EA promises that we'll see it this fall. Let's hope so, because this is a long-overdue update to one of the classic football titles. More action game than sim, MADDEN 97 will boast a lot of host new features, including situational substitutions, nine audibles, modem and LAN play, downloadable weekly stats and a new instant replay feature that lets you track the ball or any player. A second CD includes the "Madden University," where the inimitable Mr. Madden takes you through the fundamentals of the game and offers strategic guidance.

Electronic Arts, (415) 571-7171, MS-DOS

NBA FULL COURT PRESS

ABC isn't the only 800-pound gorilla entering the computer sports scene this year. 98-pound weakling Bill Gates and his humble startup, Microsoft, is hustling onto the digital par-quet with NBA FULL COURT PRESS—and you can stop laughing now. We

checked this game out at E3, hoping to be able to mock it for this roundup, but were stunned to see that it wasn't as lame as we were hoping—not at all. Along with the now standard-issue motion-captured animation (which needed work), the game boasts a slick interface and, based on what we saw, not half bad action-oriented gameplay. Best of all is an easily accessible and surprisingly deep playbook that diagrams each play and describes when

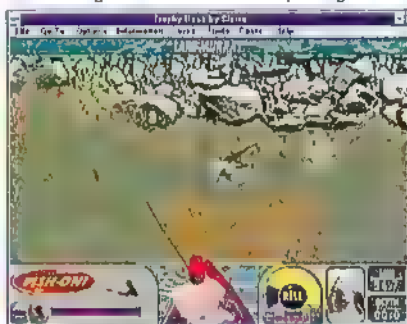


and why you might want to use it. A thoughtful touch from a name you normally don't associate with sports, to say the least.

Microsoft, (206) 882-8080, Windows 95

TROPHY BASS 2

Sierra's TROPHY BASS was one of the oddball hits in computer sports of the past year: a fishing simulation that reeled in gamers who previously hadn't been any closer to the sport than a sushi bar. Now Sierra is prepping a sequel, TROPHY BASS 2, with enough new features to keep things interesting. Five new lakes



(for a total of 10), improved AI for fish, lure and wake, and new full-motion video tips from bass fishing pros are all being added to the stew, but the real draw this time will be the multi-

player capabilities. You can fish in tournaments with others over modems, LANs and the Internet, which adds a nice competitive edge to the title. Now all that's missing is the virtual beer.

Sierra, (800) 757-7707, Windows 95 and 3.1

ON THE BENCH

Visual Concepts is releasing the next two titles in its lineup, VR Baseball—which should be out by the time you read this—and VR Baseball, scheduled for fall. The graphics on the first two titles—VR Soccer and VR Football—were outstanding, the gameplay was top-notch, and the business are intriguing titles. Well worth watching. As a side note, I worked on the forward by Madden 97—and I'm thinking about whether to continue the franchise or branch out in a new direction. You vote for the latter! GTE isn't the only company working the college circuit. My escape is hard at work on two titles: NCAA Basketball: Final Four and NCAA Football: Saturday Showdown. Finally look for Sierra to expand its Front-Page Sports franchise with FPS GOLF this fall.

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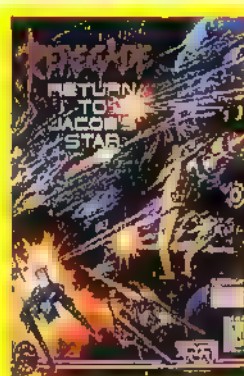
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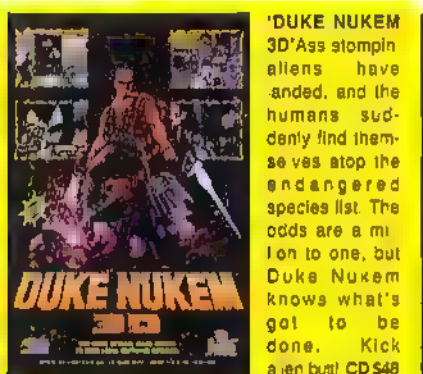
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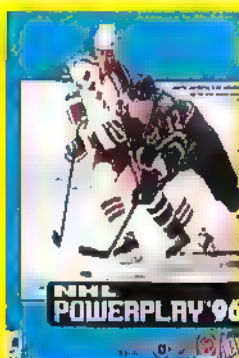
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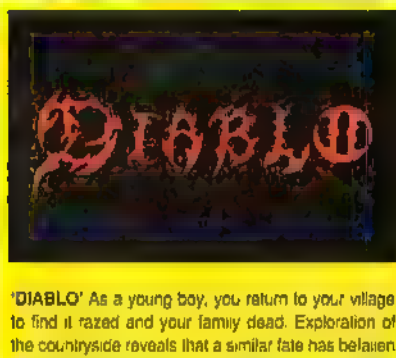
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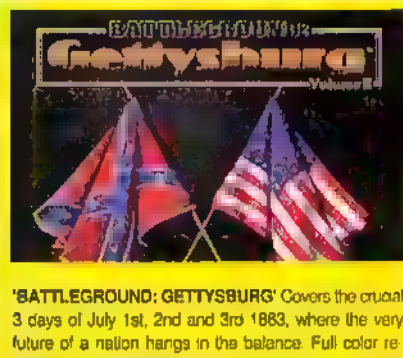
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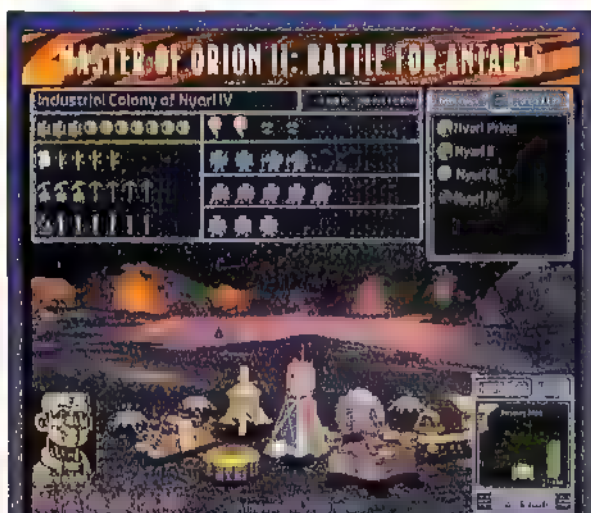
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For those of you who were finally able to put Civ II aside, prepare your willpower for another sleep-depriving assault. Since our sneak preview, the game has undergone an SVGA facelift, but it's more than new graphics that entice. The well-defined alien races are possessed of even more personality than before, and what was already the best diplomatic AI in gaming has been improved, so that those Darkoks are sneakier than ever. Limitations on ship design have been lifted, and there are more tactical options in space and planetary combat. One of the few weaknesses of MOO, the tedious and confusing interface, has been totally revamped for easier navigation. Heroes make an appearance, but unlike those in MASTER OF MAGIC, they don't totally dominate play. And our best sources tell us that we'll finally have multiplayer for humans (or Bularathi, or Pajons). The closest thing this year to a sure-fire sci-fi hit—our compliments to both Steve Barclay and MicroProse for not rushing this one.

MicroProse, (800) 695-4283, DOS

STARCRAFT

Taking a temporary hiatus from AZEROTH, the talented folks at Blizzard have decided to venture into the final frontier for their next real-time foray. In the endless debate between real time and turn-based strategy titles, Blizzard's WARCRAFT II has

always been

held up as the right step in real-time wargaming.

STARCRAFT, of course, will be better. Not much of the back story is known, but what we do know is that there will be three sides to



the conflict and each side will have units that play differently. In WARCRAFT II, only looks, magic and a few abilities of the upgraded troops created any difference in the two sides; STARCRAFT's three different races will each have distinct advantages and disadvantages. There are other improvements as well. You can group up to 12 units, and attacking from troop transports will be easier now. Instead of clicking once to unload your units, then grouping them and finally issuing a command to attack, you can now simply right-click on the carrier and its fighters will disembark and start shooting at the nearest enemy. There promise to be other changes to make the game more manageable and fun as well. Graphics are, of course, top notch, and gameplay can only get better. Await this real time winner in Winter of 1996.

Blizzard, (800) 953-SHOW, DOS and Windows 95

STAR GENERAL

FANTASY GENERAL was a good sequel to PANZER GENERAL, but STAR GENERAL will be even better. In this fourth incarnation of the GENERAL series, the venue is outer space, with both space battles between ships and land battles on planet surfaces. There will be seven races in the game, though only the human



player is available in the campaign. There will be mini-campaigns though, for each race, which gamers will be able to play. Unlike the previous games, there will be network, modem and direct link play, as well as play by email. For multiplayer games, players can choose any of the seven races. STAR GENERAL's interface will be a little better, with the addition of the split screens. In FANTASY GENERAL, when you opened up a unit-purchase screen or looked at a unit, the non-combat screen would cover up the combat screen, meaning you couldn't look at your units and check out the enemy stats at the same time. In STAR GENERAL, non-combat screens are only half screen size, so they won't obscure the combat view. There will be six levels to each unit, depending the level of technology you possess, and terrain and celestial bodies will figure significantly in gameplay (watch out for the black holes). Prepare to be blown away by the best PANZER GENERAL sequel yet. Coming this winter.

SSI/Mindscape, (800) 601-7529, DOS and Windows 95

AGENTS OF JUSTICE: SUPER HEROES



Imagine the old paper RPG *Champions* finally emerging from the head of Jack Kirby, but with more emphasis on a tactical combat system reminiscent of *X-Com*, and featuring the strategic network of secret agents from *Rocket Ranger*. *Agents of Justice* is all this, and more—because it takes vigilantes in bizarre costumes quite seriously, thank you. The art work is a nice cross between the classic Marvel/DC Comics and the modern “realistic” comic styles. The super powers—energy blasts, leaping buildings, invisibility, enough strength to make Arnold cry in his Austrian beer—cover the gamut of comic-book fantasy. Best of all, since the villains and their insidious plots vary with each new game, there’s always another reason to don your cape and cowl for another night of costumed heroism. Kryptonite shake, anyone?

MicroProse, (800) 695-4263, DOS.

HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC II

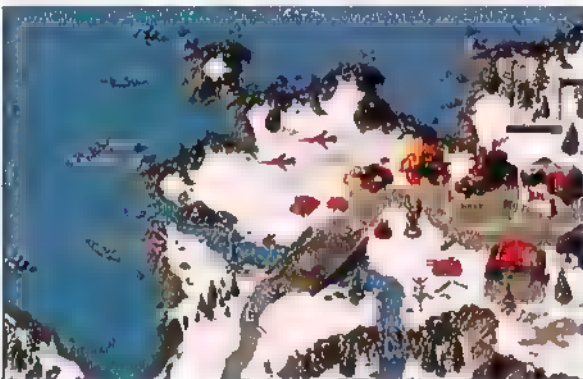
The goal of the designers at New World Computing is to make everything bigger for *Heroes of Might and Magic II*. The original was a great strategy game, with RPG elements, a good magic system, exploration and tough AI. *Heroes II* will keep all that but add a lot more for a better, more consistent game. Now, the campaign will have more continuity, as you choose to champion either the good or evil side and then vanquish the enemy forces. Cut scenes will hopefully advance the story between scenarios in the campaign, and victory or failure in one scenario will affect what happens in the rest of the campaign. Aside from the welcome and more integrated campaign, *Heroes II* will have two new classes: the Wizard and the Necromancer. The Wizard will have more fantastic units, like halflings, while the Necromancer will command undead. There will also be more spells and a new level to the mage guild. The battlefield will double in size, and all the monsters from *Heroes I* will undergo a major facelift for *Heroes II*. The designers felt that the troops in the original were too light, and have made everyone look a lot tougher. This sequel should arrive around October.

New World Computing, (818) 889-5600, DOS and Windows 95



RED ALERT

Command & Conquer has been running neck-and-neck with *Warcraft II* for the title of most popular real time strategy game, and *Red Alert* looks poised to follow *Starcraft* closely into the next level of real time gaming. The premise is a World War II that never happened: Hitler never came



to power and Stalin is instead the enemy of choice for the Allies. *Red Alert* will be VGA and support up to six players over modem, direct link or network. There will be sea and air units, an updated fog of war, more espionage, sabotage and special units, and a wider playing field. The enemy AI will be even tougher than in *Covert Ops*, and the AI of your own troops will be upgraded slightly. They will find paths more intelligently and defend themselves better, but will still perform best when you take direct control. Enhancements in the gameplay will include the ability to save formations and a new harvesting model. Now, you will mine for copper, tin or iron. Each metal will contribute a different value to a pool of money, from which you draw cash to build structures and units. Two sides will be available for this battle: Allied and Soviet. As usual, each will exhibit different strengths and weaknesses with the Allies having superior naval power and the Soviets enjoying air superiority. Be ready to rewrite history this October.

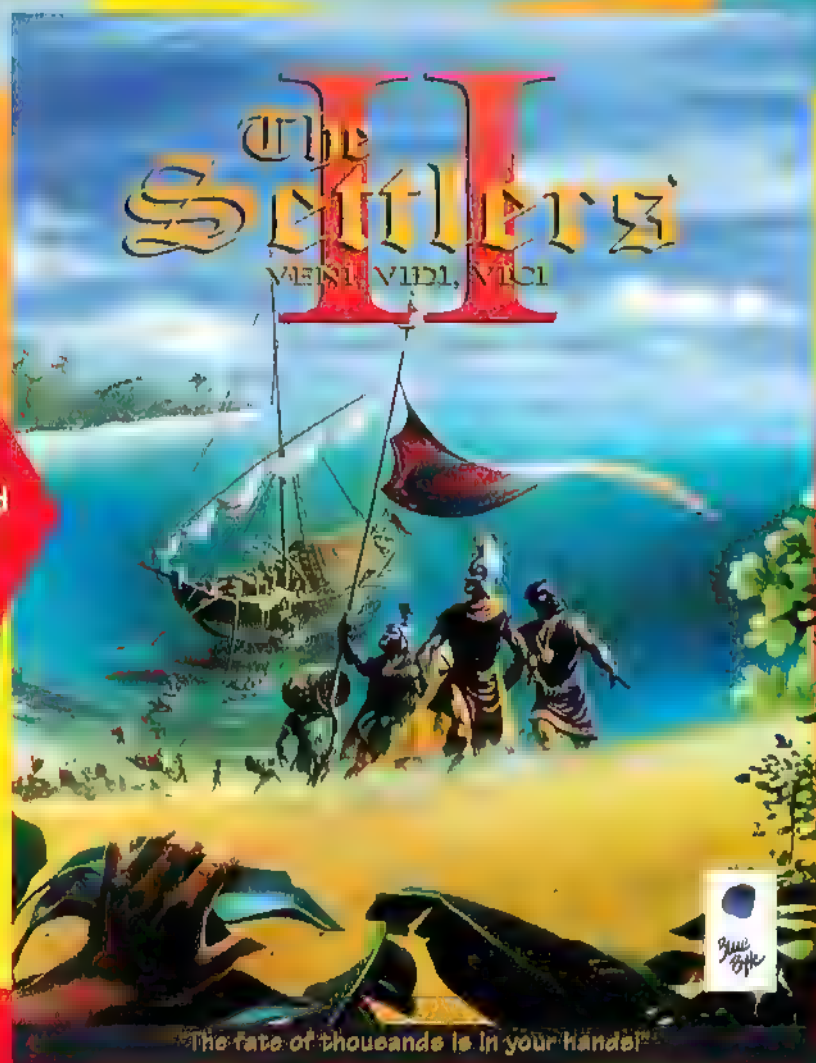
Westwood/Virgin, (800) 360-7455, DOS and Windows 95

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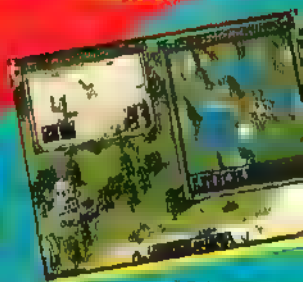
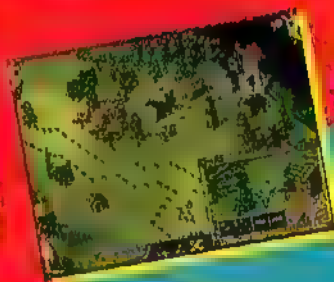


“Those seeking the ultimate game to build the empire of their dreams will need to look no farther than Settlers II.”

Computer Game Review

“The Settlers II is a masterpiece of strategy and simulation.”
Strategy Plus, June '96

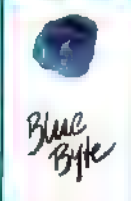
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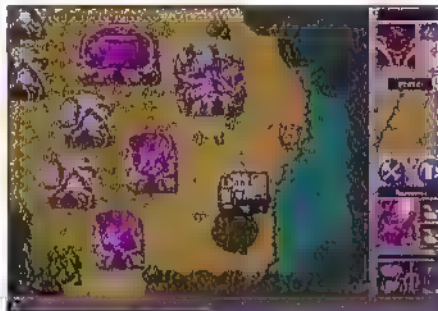
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WAR WIND

It will take a lot to dethrone WARCRAFT II as the king of fantasy real-time wargaming, but WAR WIND, from SSI, just might be up to the task. This is

SSI's first real-time strategy game, and it will have four distinct races, each with different abilities. There will be a more considered campaign here than in either the WARCRAFT or C&C lines; you'll be able to carry forces from mission to mission, so if you upgrade a few particularly nasty troops, you can take them with you into the next battles. There will also be a few RPG elements: magic items and other goodies will be sprinkled over the mission maps for explorers to take, and rather than being an abstract commander you will now be a leader who gains in stats, such as prestige. The more prestige you have, the more heroes will come to join your campaign. All the great gameplay



MORE STRATEGY CHALLENGES

Blizzard's PAX IMPERIA 2 is the sequel to the classic Mac space strategy. It's a definite contender for most expansive space title. PAX IMPERIA 2 can be played either real-time or turn-based, and will have all the features of a MASTER OF ORION-style space strat: diplomacy, research, exploration and conquest.

↳ LORDS OF THE REALM 2 is the sequel to Impression's classic. This strategy game sees you as the ruler of a small fief in England. The object is to conquer all the British isles while managing your fiefdom.

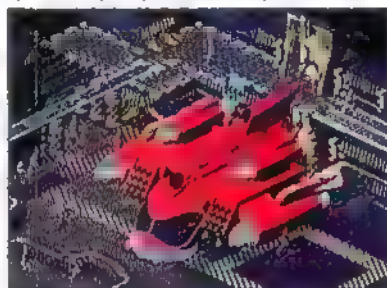
of real-time warfare will be here as well, such as numerous units and structures to build and command, lush SVGA graphics, on-the-fly strategy and fast destruction. SSI assures us they'll also be trying to take AI in this genre to a new level, making troops more intelligent and not so dependent on direct control. Look for this strong new entrant this winter.

SSI/Mindscape, (800) 601-7529, Windows 95

X-COM: THE APOCALYPSE

The Big Question: will the tactical combat in X-Com: The APOCALYPSE be turn-based or real-time? Well, it's both.

The developers hope this will enable them to build on the brand loyalty of X-Com while simultaneously moving into C & C and WARCRAFT II territory. Certainly they needed to try something other than simply pumping up the hit points of the aliens, as in X-Com: TERROR FROM THE DEEP. This newest invasion from afar sports even neater alien grenade explosions, scouts crawling around sewer pipes, etc. But it seemed as if the flow of the tactical module was designed first for real-time, then had turn-based play retro-fitted to keep X-Com vets from revolting. Also, the idea of selling the game in a future metropolis where you search for aliens in human form looks, at least for now, more like *X-Files* than X-Com. When we asked why they didn't let you play from the alien side, they wondered why anyone would want to. Moreover, the final assault on the alien home world (it isn't in the game yet) sounds even more anti-climactic than the ending of the first X-Com. Where are Scully and Mulder when you need them?



MicroProse, (800) 695-4263, DOS

"Johnson? Do you copy??...
Johnson, we have a situation...
Over!"

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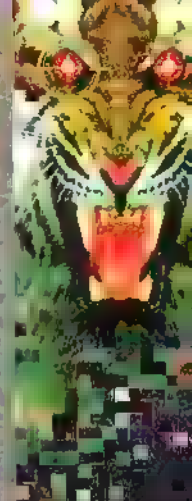
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STEEL PANTHERS II: MODERN BATTLES



Gary Grigsby goes modern—more high-tech toys of destruction, more explosions, different terrain—but still featuring that surprisingly brisk turn-based play. Gary and Keith Bros are also working to improve the AI, while the mysterious SSI Special Projects Group continues to weave its magic on interface and graphics. Only slightly more complex than the original (due to the newer technology of the weaponry), Modern Battles looks to be another direct hit from the SSI juggernaut.

SSI, (800) 601-7529, DOS

OVER THE REICH

FLIGHT COMMANDER in WWII—on steroids—and every bit as realistic: British Spitfires fly circles around German FW 190s, B-17s take incred.ble amounts of damage and still deliver their payloads; every weapon from machine guns to cannon to rockets is but a mouse click away. While the dogfights are fun, it's really the campaign game that sets this turn-based flight



strategy game apart, as you don the goggles and scarf of RAF, USAAF, or Luftwaffe pilots, to decide the world's fate in the skies of Europe. (For more, see Terry Coleman's Strategy/Wargame column on page 179.)

Avalon Hill, (800) 999-3222, Windows and Mac

"Your report said the villa was lightly guarded. My people are getting torn to pieces in this HELLHOLE!"...

"WHAT?! I don't care what it costs!..."

SCREW the damn budget—we need

SUPPORT!"

NEW WORLD COMPUTING, INC.

WAGES OF WAR
THE BUSINESS OF BATTLE

AGE OF RIFLES

Norm Koger's done a lot of pacing, because his latest offspring has been in labor even longer than most sequels. But he might actually get to hand out those celebratory cigars, because the extra time has given Norm the opportunity to craft some 60 scenarios from the Mexican-American War to the turn of the century, liberally spiced with some nice-looking American Civil War



battles. Shock and fire combat vary according to the restraints of each conflict, and the game, while not as attractive as say, *STEEL PANTHERS*, lavishly oozes historical flavor in an easily digested, entertaining format. Finally, the design your own function is a boon for those whose favorite obscure 19th century battles aren't included.

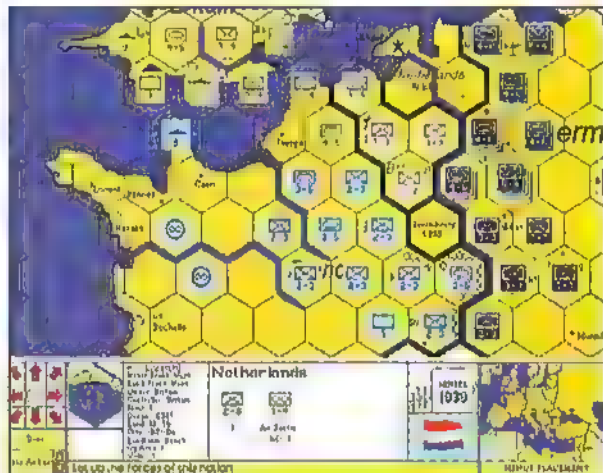
SSI, (800) 601-7529, DOS

THIRD REICH

The word from The Hill is that this monster WWII European-theatre wargame will finally ship (after reportedly going through three major re-designs). Even with the computer handling a lot of the economic and support functions so tedious in the boardgame, this is one intimidating product—mainly because the abstract, yet complex nature of the board game has been faithfully recreated, even to niggling details like Lend-Lease and those strange breakthroughs from beach-heads. Nonetheless, *THIRD REICH* offers a grand strategic look at WWII that's available nowhere else, and seri-

MORE ROUNDS IN THE CHAMBER

HPS Simulations is putting the finishing touches on *TIGERS ON THE PAW II*, bringing it up to Panthers in the Shadows standards. Designer/owner Scott Hamilton is also hard at work wrapping up *Aide De Camp 2* to give your old board games new life on the computer. Speaking of old board games, AH's *ARKIA KORE*, designed mainly for e-mail play, is shaping up nicely. *Triumph Over Desert* does well enough at the box office, AH plans to revamp *Vietnam* (the original *D-Day*) and perhaps even *Guadalcanal* for the PC crowd. For even more WWII fare, there's *Pacific Tide* from Arsenal (due late fall), and the epic *The Last Butzkrieg* from SSG, whenever Roger Keeling, Ian Trout and the lads feel they've finally captured the Bulge, feel enough to release the game. And for those who need a "last stand" fix, *Zuwwani* will continue the tradition of Custer's *Last Command* from Incredible Simulations.



ous wargamers are far more likely to finish a game via e-mail than over the board. And where else can you conquer (or liberate) France in one or two (admittedly long) turns?

Avalon Hill, (800) 999-3222, DOS

BATTLEGROUND: SHILOH

As the Talonsoft crew continues to hone its craft, these "battle grounds" increase in both realism and sheer fun. The terrain here is a major obstacle for the Rebels, who must drive Grant's troops into the sea before General Buell arrives on Pittsburg Landing with fresh troops. The fighting around the Hornet's Nest is appropriately bitter, and even in this early stage, the game captures the ebb and flow of "Bloody April." Even Gettysburg fanatics are well-advised to march down south for this one. **S**

Talonsoft, (410) 933-9191, Windows



"Listen you BASTARD, all HELL'S breakin' loose!
Lord Salvatore and his boys have us pinned down. If I don't
get SOME back-up by 03:00, your client will NEVER see
his precious little angel AGAIN!!... And Johnson,
I don't care WHAT it does to your
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WAGES OF WAR

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[illegible]

**"SEE YOU NEXT
WEEK, SUCKER."**

"OH, #S@!+!"



Hayes
The Inventor
Of The PC Modem

Dirty Video

Why Interactive Video Isn't, And What's Being Done About It

Interactive Video may very well be a contradiction in terms, but the use of digital video in computer games is on the rise. The use of DV (as it's commonly called) is somewhat controversial in the game community because good video requires a serious expenditure of resources, and many game designers worry that video shorts—and the associated costs—are adversely affecting the quality of new game titles.

But that's not what this column is about.

Like it or not, digital video is here to stay. Even games that don't purport to be "interactive movies" are now using digital video technology. Those games might not even use live actors—opting instead to use 3D animation. But rather than render the animation, it's often delivered to your screen as video. So let's dive into the underpinnings to better understand what's going on underneath the hood.

Remember the first digital video clips? At best, they had a resolution of around

160x120, they were jerky and the sound was often unsynchronized. Lately, I've been playing a lot of *CIVILIZATION II*, and have been quite impressed with the quality of the embedded video clips describing the Wonders of the World and the civilization advisors. An even more impressive game (in its use of digital video) is *ZORK: NEXTSISS*, which segues between video and computer animation on the fly. Even a year in this business can make a big difference: *WING COMMANDER IV*'s video clips are vastly improved over those in *WING COMMANDER III*.

Nonetheless, video on a PC has tended to look pretty awful. Most of us have seen videos replete with huge, blocky pixels moving around the screen, or bizarre color changes occurring on the fly. These distortions happen because of the high degree of compression used in most video streams

ONE MOTHER OF A LOAD

Delivering video to the computer screen is one of the most demanding applications a PC encounters. NTSC is the standard video delivery medium (your television is

tection technology. It's exactly this kind of short-sighted approach that quashed widespread acceptance of DAT (Digital Audio Tape) players. If the movie business refuses to release their content on DVD, it could tremendously slow down the acceptance of DVD technology, and keep prices of DVD drives too high for most consumers.

The movie industry has had some other notable memory lapses. In the early '70's, they cried wail when VCRs appeared on the scene. In the end, though, sales of prerecorded videos have added enormously to the revenue and profit stream of the media business. Those who do not observe the lessons of history,

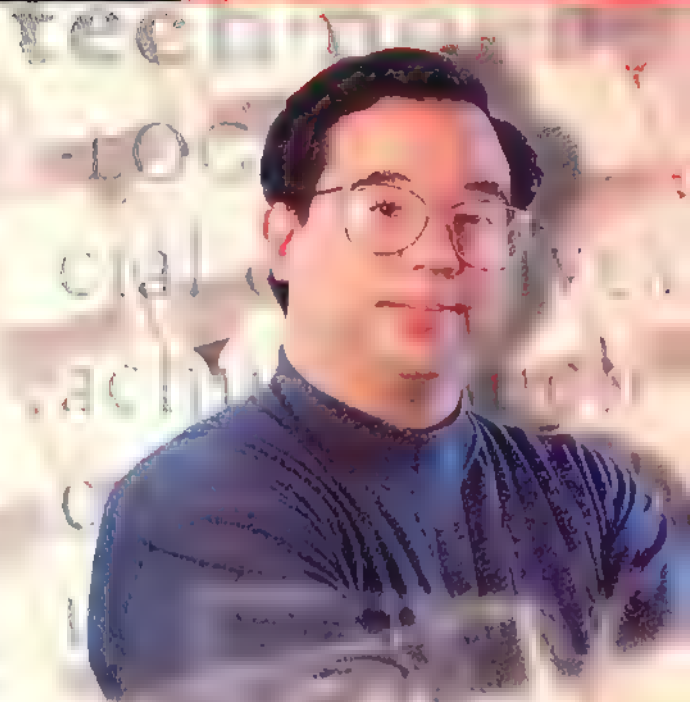
NTSC), and is an analog format. Digitizing NTSC can result in gargantuan amounts of data. Raw, uncompressed NTSC video has a resolution of 752x486. If you figure that each frame is 24-bit color, and there are 30 frames in each second of video, you're suddenly faced with a data stream of 32 MB per second—kinda makes your average CD-ROM seem downright puny.

Even if you had the storage space, you couldn't get 32 MB/sec from your computer out to the video screen without specialized hardware. And your average EIDE disk drive certainly couldn't move data that fast.

There are some clever ways to lighten the load: developers often decrease the frame size and color depth, reducing storage space enormously. But the real secret to delivering high-quality video to your computer screen is *compression*. The software engine that handles the compression and decompression is called a *coder* (coder-decoder).

There are two types of compression: *lossy* and *non-lossy*. *Lossy* compression simply means that some data is thrown away during the compression phase, which isn't necessarily bad since much of the video data is redundant. But *lossy* compression, poorly done, results in *compression artifacts*—blocky pixels, weird color blending and "sparkling" around the edges of areas with high contrast. Almost

“As 3D graphics and video begin to converge, the idea of ‘interactive video’ might really become viable.”



Copy Protection Fight Threatens DVD Release

DVD disk technology has the potential to truly cement the convergence between the media business (movies, television and music) and the computer industry. With capacities in excess of 4 gigabytes, DVD disks can hold entire movies, higher resolution music and all of *Wing Commander IV* on a single disk. DVD drives will even play current CD-ROMs.

Now a consortium of motion picture companies, led by the Motion Picture Association of America, is creating anti-copy technology, while urging the U.S. Congress to pass legislation to prohibit DVD player sales that do not include copy pro-

all video codecs on PCs use some form of lossy compression.

FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS

One of the early attempts to put video on PCs was Apple's Quicktime technology from the Macintosh side. But Quicktime never really took hold in the Intel world, mainly because Microsoft decided it wanted to go its own way, and developed Video for Windows (VFW for short). Some of the early releases of VFW exhibited very poor quality, but things have since gotten much better. There are a host of codecs available for Windows, including Microsoft's Video 1 and RLE compression (neither are particularly good), Cinepak (from Radius, and originally developed for Quicktime) and Intel Indeo.

The latest twist in the codec game comes in the form of Quicktime VR and Intel Indeo Interactive. Indeo Interactive is interesting, because it features branching video streams and video sprites, allowing video to respond faster to user input.

Certainly some Windows games use standard Video for Windows files and technology (CIVILIZATION II being an example). However, things never remain the same, and Microsoft has announced its ActiveMovie technology, which will sit on top of the DirectDraw API. At the heart of ActiveMovie is the MPEG-1 (Motion Pictures Experts Group) codec, which can deliver fairly high-quality, full-screen video. MPEG is a lossy compression system, and is also *asymmetric*, meaning that it takes longer to compress than decompress. On

today's fast Pentiums, an MPEG-1 file can be decompressed in software delivering respectable frame rates. Only a couple of years ago, MPEG playback required dedicated hardware.

Interestingly, however, many games are not delivered with freely available codecs. For one thing, most DOS games couldn't use VFW, and had to implement something else. Companies like Rad Software came to the rescue with a product called Smacker (Smacker video files will have an .SMK extension). No one can claim that Smacker's video display quality is stellar, but it's fast and the files take up very little space.

Another company getting more involved in PC games is DUCK Corporation, with their 'TrueMotion S' technology. Zenix NEAR.SS, among others, uses 'TrueMotion S', and the Windows 95 version of the game looks gorgeous. But why would a game developer pay to use 'TrueMotion S' when they can use Video for Windows for free?

The answer lies in two areas: cross-platform development and video quality.

'TrueMotion S' runs on PCs, Macs, Sega Saturn and Sony Playstation. For a game developer looking to maximize their development dollars, this versatility is attractive. DUCK has implemented 'TrueMotion' to be a self-contained video playback engine and codec-independent of QuickTime or VFW—which developers can embed in their applications. On top of that, 'TrueMotion S', which is a software-only scheme and looks very good, even compared to MPEG-1

HELLO DOWN THERE?

Finally, there's the issue of graphics cards. In the Windows environment, at least, your graphics card can have a big impact on the quality of digital video. Hardware can come to the rescue in two important areas: the first is color-space conversion. Video color encoding differs from the standard RGB (red, blue, green) used in computer monitors and graphics cards, so there has to be a conversion from one color "space" to another. The second thing hardware can accelerate is *scaling*. When you enlarge a video clip, the pixels often get gigantic and the overall effect is pretty ugly. Newer graphics cards offer X-Y scaling—the hardware handles the scaling up of video resolution (which is fixed in the file) and *interpolates* between the pixels to make the image look more pleasing.

So the next time you boot up a game, and notice that the animation looks a bit strange, remember that it's probably a video file you're seeing. Maybe someday—when DVD disks arrive and we're running on SuperIntel Colossal Pentium Pro 900 MHz CPUs—we'll have full-screen, full-resolution video on our computers. As 3D graphics and video begin to converge, the idea of "interactive video" might really become viable since hardware will exist to render video like 3D worlds. Until then, we'll have to content ourselves with codec-crunched video whose image quality still isn't quite convincing, and whose interactivity—though making strides—is also less than ideal. ☺

CTIPS!

Backing up the Windows 95 Registry

The Windows 95 registry is a database that contains all the information about your system, including what hardware is in your system, what software is installed and a host of other options and settings. The registry consists of two hidden files, USER.DAT and SYSTEM.DAT. Lose the registry, and your Windows 95 system is hosed.

You can back up the registry using REGEDIT, but there's a better way. On the Microsoft Windows CD, in the directory \OTHER\MISC\CFGBACK is a program called CFGBACK. It allows you to keep up to nine dif-

ferent backups of the registry, all with different names.

More Memory Without Spending More Money

If you can't free up quite enough memory under the Windows 95 MS-DOS prompt for that big DOS game, but don't want to spend \$60 or so for a third-party memory manager, then you can always use MEMMAKER. Wait a minute, you say. I can't find it anywhere. As it turns out, MEMMAKER is squirreled away on the Windows 95 CD-ROM under the directory \OTHER\OLDMSDOS. Just copy the files into your \windows\command directory and type MEMMAKER at the DOS prompt.

Configuring Your Default Configuration

On Microsoft's web site, there's a section called "Free Software" (<http://www.microsoft.com/win->

[dows/software/knrltoy.htm](http://www.microsoft.com/win-dows/software/knrltoy.htm)). One nifty little tool that's been added is a program called the MS-DOS Mode Configuration Wizard Customization Tool (or DOSWZCFG—now we know what happened to those defense department engineers), which is part of the Kernel Toys package. Despite its unwieldy name, DOSWZCFG is actually useful for gamers. If you've ever right-clicked on a DOS game icon and tried to configure its memory setting, you've probably been frustrated by the minimal entries that are added to the CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT options. DOSWZCFG allows you to add lines to these default configurations. Although you're limited to adding a maximum of ten lines, with a little judicious fiddling, you'll never have to copy and paste from a configuration file again.

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Gaming On The Big Screen

Gateway Moves Computing Into The Living Room

by Dave Salvador

Price: \$4698 as tested (includes Harmon-Kardon audio)
Gateway 2000 Computer, Inc.
Sioux City, SD
(800) 846-4208
Reader Service #: 316

It's a dessert topping. No, it's a floor wax. Don't argue, this one's both. Gateway wants their Destination to be your next home entertainment system *and* home PC/gaming rig. For all the talk about "convergence," Gateway has actually taken steps to bring a great idea to fruition. What makes the Destination any different from other systems? For starters, there's the big honkin' 31-in. monitor that wears both the TV and VGA monitor hats, and wireless keyboard and "Field Mouse" remote controls. Because their design focus was on home entertainment and more family-or-

ented computing, there are some rough edges that gamers will have to tolerate. But Destination's performance numbers and smooth frame rates running action titles make it a respectable, though not optional gaming rig.

First, here's the plumbing: Destination ships with a 133 or 166 MHz Pentium CPU, 256 KB pipelined burst L2 cache, 16 MB of RAM, a 1.2 GB hard drive, 6x Weanex CD-ROM drive, a 28.8 Kbps internal fax/modem, a 31-in. VGA monitor (can you say "big picture"?), an STB graphics board based on Brooktree's Bv chipset with 2 MB of VRAM and a TV tuner, and an STB sound card based on

AMD's InterWave chipset. A Harmon-Kardon Dolby Pro-Logic stereo amplifier/tuner with five speakers and a subwoofer is optionally available with Destination for an additional \$700.

On the software side, Destination ships configured with Windows 95, and comes with a mess o' multimedia titles, and some game titles ranging from so-so (Tilt, 11v4-) to good (YOU DON'T KNOW JACK).

Installation was fairly straightforward, with a large, step-by-step manual to guide you through the process. You'll definitely want to conscript several burly friends to help schlep the monitor unless you're really fond of hernias. If you get the Harmon-Kardon audio system, you'll need some wire-strippers as well to cut and strip the speaker cabling.

Some of Destination's noteworthy features include an Interactive TV Guide where, with a subscription, you can download the weekly TV Guide via modem for quick reference. Double-clicking on a running TV program's entry in the Guide will take you immediately to that program. You can also set reminders that a certain program is coming on. Yes, you can run your VCR into the Destination since it has two video inputs, but unfortunately, there's no way to interface the Interactive TV Guide and your VCR's programming features, so you'll still have to face the dreaded task of manually programming the VCR. Since the TV viewer is a Windows 95 application, you can run it full-screen or size the TV picture so you can pretend to do work while watching *Love Boat* reruns.

continued on page 115 ▶▶▶



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And as if that weren't enough, you also get three amazing free 3D games including: MechWarrior 2™ from Activision, Thunder Truck Rally™ from Psygnosis and Scorched Planet™ from Criterion Studios, plus a 3D Web browser and a software MPEG player.

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On The ViRGE

Testing The New Hercules And Diamond ViRGE 3D Boards

by Loyd Case

After much anticipation, game-oriented 3D graphic accelerators are finally beginning to hit the streets. I had the opportunity to take a close look at two cards, both based on the S3 ViRGE 3D accelerator, both with 2 MB of video memory (the same brand and speed of memory chips, no less) and both shipping with some titles that take advantage of the onboard 3D acceleration

only time and titles will tell.

The first wave of ViRGE-based cards will have 2 MB of EDO DRAM onboard, and will not be expandable. Although the ViRGE's specs call for potential expansion up to 4 MB, the initial product offering only supports 2 MB.

This lack of expandability may have some ramifications for gameplay and performance. Most DOS games (and even Windows games) these days will typically run at 640x480. But if the game needs to have a lot of textures loaded into the video memory, there's not enough memory left over for double-buffering, a technique for fast, 3D frame-rate performance. It's likely that we'll see resolution scaled down a bit (512x384 is the "sweet spot" here), but color depth can be increased to 16-bit (65,536 colors), which is far better than the old DOS VCA standard.

We did have one minor problem installing the DirectX drivers. (DirectX is the Microsoft software interface for fast Windows games.) Initially, the installation failed, but a quick perusal of the readme file uncovered problems installing from the CD. A quick copy to a floppy, then using the floppy as the installation medium, solved the problem.

Although Hercules hadn't released their PowerDrive Windows drivers when we tested the card, they did ship us their version of the S3 ViRGE driver set. On a PI66, the Terminator 64 nicked up fairly fast Winbench 96 scores (see table 1). DOS performance was a cut above past S3 chips, and about on par with the Matrox Millennium in VCA.

DIAMOND STEALTH 3D 2000

Diamond has taken the ViRGE's parentage as a Trio64V+ to heart, and has essentially built a replacement for their own Stealth Video 2201 card. The card looks very similar to the 2201, including connectors for the TV tuner and MPEG decoder. The only difference is the use of single-cycle, EDO DRAM.

Installation was the easiest we've seen, following all the conventions for Windows 95. When you boot Windows 95, you'll see a message box saying a "PCI VCA compatible adapter has been found." Just click on the "Install new driver," point to the correct directory on the Stealth 3D installation CD, and Windows 95 handles the rest. If you're installing for Windows 3.1, make sure that Windows is in VCA mode before running Diamond's install program. One minor annoyance was installing DirectX, which requires you to run the setup utility inside the DirectX directory on the CD, an additional step not handled by the installation process.

Diamond bundles DESCENT 2, DESTINATION Q, PARTIZON and

THE ViRGE: BOLTING ON 3D

As we noted in last month's 3D technology overview, the S3 ViRGE is based on the Trio64V+ chip, which is used in a number of multimedia accelerators, including those from Diamond and Hercules. The Trio64V+ is a fairly speedy chip in Windows and even has respectable, although not stellar, DOS performance. Although the ViRGE has all the features that game designers would want to use, there is a worry that the 3D acceleration may bog down when many of the features are turned on. The ViRGE's feature set includes perspective-corrected texture maps, MIP mapping of textures, bilinear filtering, z-buffering, alpha blending and fog effects. Unfortunately, the few 3D games around don't make extensive use of all features, so

THE HERCULES TERMINATOR 64/3D

A few years ago Hercules stumbled into the game market by shipping graphics cards that had very fast DOS performance. Word spread through the gaming community, and Hercules began to realize how important the game market was to their success. The Terminator 64/3D is Hercules' first entry into the soon-to-be-crowded 3D accelerator market.

The Terminator 64/3D has 2 MB of single-cycle, EDO DRAM on board. Like most of the new 3D graphics accelerators it's bundled with a set of software, but Hercules hadn't determined which titles to bundle when we reviewed the card.

Installation was pretty straightforward. If you're running Windows 95, you bypass the "New Hardware Found" message and run the Terminator 64/3D setup program, which installs the Windows drivers, and the Hercules Touch 95 utility for managing refresh rates and changing the resolution and color depth.



Hercules Terminator 64/3D

Estimated Street Price: \$219
Hercules Technologies
Fremont, CA
(800) 532-0800
<http://www.hercules.com>
Reader Service #: 318



Diamond Stealth 3D 2000

Estimated Street Price: \$199
Diamond Multimedia,
San Jose, CA
(800) 468-5846
<http://www.diamondmm.com>
Reader Service #: 317

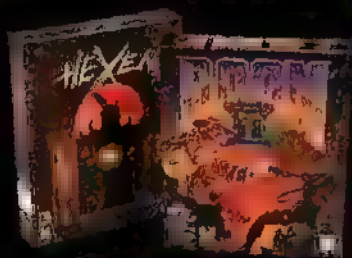
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LABS INC.

| | Stealth 3D 2000 | Terminator 64/3D |
|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Winbench 96 | | |
| 1024x768x256 colors | 31.4 | 25.3 |
| 640x480x65 000 colors | 21.5 | 30 |
| Cbench SVGA | 35.6 fps | 35.6 fps |

DESTRUCTION DERBY; both versions take advantage of the Stealth 3D's features. As we noted in our 3D overview last month, DESCENT 2 looked markedly better than the standard version because of the filtering of the wall textures.

The Stealth 3D scored very high on Winbench 96—about the highest score we've seen for an EDO DRAM card. The DOS Cbench scores are identical to the Hercules, as you might expect for an unaccelerated DOS benchmark running on the same chip with the same DRAM (Cbench is a shareware DOS-based 3D benchmark that renders shaded 3D objects, and reports the frame rate.)

to its more straightforward installation and faster Windows performance. However, Hercules has an excellent reputation for support and upgrading their drivers, and their Touch 95 utility for managing video modes has some nice features, such as being able to measure the monitor's refresh rate.

However, we can't really comment on 3D performance until more 3D titles ship and a good 3D benchmark arrives.

Many game developers will be supporting the VIRGE, and more will be supporting Direct3D. Until then, either of these cards will perform quite well for the current crop of DOS games and run

THE 3D JURY IS OUT

Both these cards would be a very solid addition to any game player's system. The nod goes to the

Diamond card, due

Windows applications pretty quickly to boot. But like Godot, the 3D-accelerated games are still yet to come—and we'll be waiting. **E**

DIAMOND STEALTH 3D 2000

APPEAL: Gamers looking for great 2D performance and good 3D performance.

PROS: Good bundled titles, well-priced.

CONS: 3D performance isn't stellar.



HERCULES TERMINATOR 64/3D

APPEAL: (same as above)

PROS: Handy Windows 95 configuration tools. Great 2D performance.

CONS: 3D title bundle is still unannounced; 3D performance probably won't be stunning.



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1. The first part of the paper discusses the
 importance of the study of the history of
 the United States. It is a study of the
 past, and it is a study of the present.

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MEDICAL

Содержание

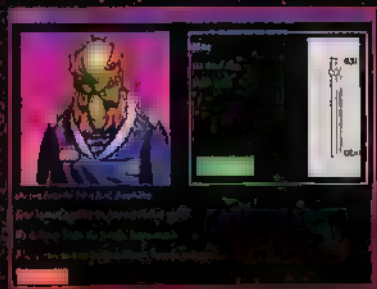
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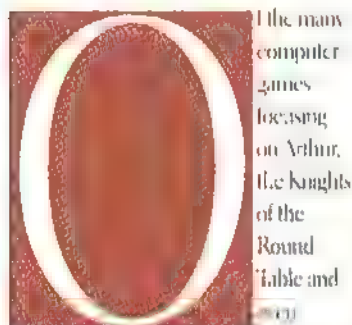
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Oil Those Weapons

CHRONICLES OF THE SWORD Offers Creaky Plot, Rusty Characters



Of the many computer games focusing on Arthur, the knights of the Round Table and

Merlin, none of them, really, were particularly good *although Christy Marx'XXX was a step in the right direction—ed.*. *CHRONICLES OF THE SWORD*, the latest adventure game from Psynopsis, is sadly more of the same. In this outing, you maneuver Sir Gawain, newly-created knight, through a series of episodes beginning in Camelot and ending up in Morgana's castle at Lynesse.

The game opens with an automated sequence of Gawain being knighted alternating with Morgana's brutal murder of a priest in the castle's chapel. As something must be done about that, Gawain is dispatched to deliver a magical indictment

to Morgana. This results in her banishment, and, not pleased, she attempts to kill Arthur. The king, in turn, is not pleased, and now Gawain is sent off to take care of Morgana once and for all.



IRON PUMPING Beefy heroes are OK, but when even Merlin and Arthur look like refugees from weightlifting contests, it's too much. And isn't that fellow in the back moonlighting from *STONEKEEP*?

Typical for adventure games, the interface is simple. The basic cursor is an arrow that changes to a pair of blue footprints when over an exit, or red when it moves over something of interest, an item to look at or pick up, a person to talk to,

etc. Items are used by putting them on the cursor and clicking them on other items or on a person. If the object is not appropriate to the situation, nothing much will happen. You can't lose something inadvertently, and there is no

way to drop anything.

Moving Gawain around is equally simple; he always walks automatically to the item, person, or exit clicked upon, if that is possible. You can also click elsewhere on the screen to move him, although that is rarely needed.

Conversations are an important part of the game; this is about the only way to obtain clues and information. Talking follows the familiar pattern of choosing questions or remarks from a list of topics. Topics can change over time as things happen in the game or Gawain learns new information, so it's usually necessary to talk to people more than once as the game progresses.

I happily for those whose sound cards are not supported, are hard of hearing, or

“CHRONICLES OF THE SWORD is a mediocre product. For a taste of the real thing, read *Le Mort d'Arthur* instead.”

CRYSTAL BALL

► At press time, 3DO (believe it or not) had just purchased New World Computing. Our sources tell us that this will not adversely affect the next installment of the award-winning *Might & Magic* series.

► Contrary to any rumors you may have heard, Avalon Hill currently has no plans to convert the classic *Runequest* paper RPG

system to the computer. Ironically, the time seems ripe for the introduction of tried-and-true systems into the market, given the recent dearth of quality CRPGs.

► Sierra has just announced that design work has begun on both *SHIVERS II* and *QUEST FOR GLORY 5*. More on this as details become available.



may just want quiet playing, text is automatically presented along with speech. Every spoken word can be seen as written words, and this includes the several automated sequences, so nothing will be

I AM SIR FED-EX

More irritating is Gawain's role in the game, which is to act as fetch dog for other people. Since he has no armor (a knight without armor, what a concept),

Merlin must make a magical ring for him. Naturally, Gawain has to do the running around to obtain the ingredients. Later, on the way to Lynesse, his traveling companion becomes ill, and once again, Gawain has to go hither and yon to gather the necessary healing items for her.

These two sets of actions comprise the mid-section of *Chronicles of the Sword*, and they are essentially without purpose, except to pad out the game. No sooner is I lele well

again, then Morgana pops in and kills her. As for the magic ring, Gawain has to give that up to reach Morgana's castle.

It is frustrating to gamers to see their efforts go for nothing, and that is what happens here. One or the other of these incidents could be accepted, but both together are too much. There is no pleasure to be derived from watching much of what you've accomplished go down the drain. It makes you wonder what the designers were thinking of here, to present such a slap in the face.

You're not always told what you need to know right out, either. For example, Merlin sends Gawain to get water from Kanevere's Well, which happens to be sealed shut, and Merlin knows this. Does he say anything about that? No, you have to parade through the woods, find the well sealed, then return to the castle and talk to people to find out why it was closed, and

what will break the seal. This is just so much busywork, and not real gaming.

MULTIPLE ANNOYANCES

The game is on two CDs. The events through forging the ring are on CD 1, the remainder, starting with the journey to Lynesse, are on CD 2. Guess what? No sooner have you begun on CD 2, then you have to turn around and go back to Camelot, which is on the first CD. Why? Why set up a situation that makes you switch from 1 to 2, and then immediately back to 1 again? And this after having sat through a long automated sequence, too.

Adding to the dreaminess is a distinct lack of period flavor, of any of the excitement and adventure associated with Arthurian legends and the knights of the Roundtable. Along with several teeth-grinding anachronisms, and a Merlin who looks more like a weightlifter than a Druid, this did not in any way seem like the glory days of knighthood and chivalry.

The save game feature leaves much to be desired. You have only six slots for save positions. As each save takes less than 20K, there is no reason to be so cheap. Worse, there is no description allowed for the saves. You click on a slot, and a small picture of where you are is all you get. Since you can easily have two or more saves in the same spot, but at different times in the game, you have to keep track of the saves on your own.

Overall, *Chronicles of the Sword* is a mediocre product at best, a mechanical exercise in "find the hot spot" and simple puzzles, with flawed design and little in the way of "when knighthood was in flower." Anyone wanting a taste of the real thing is better off reading *Le Mort d'Arthur*. ☞



A PETAL PLUCK'D There's little of the "flower of knighthood" in *Chronicles of the Sword* despite the well-rendered beauty in the foreground.

missed if you're playing silent.

There is a small amount of combat in the game, a few situations where Gawain must wield his sword. You have the choice of directing the fight yourself or letting the computer do it for you. I preferred the automatic combat myself, especially as this assures Gawain of winning.

I did not come across any bugs in *Chronicles*. The game played without trouble all the way through; no crashes or lockups, no bizarre happenings. The animation sequences were smooth, and the graphics overall quite decent. Sound quality on the Cirrus Max (supported via the Ultramid driver) was good and clear.

As adventure games go, this one is not particularly difficult. Most solutions tend to be obvious, especially once you've found the right item to use. What could make for difficulties is finding that "right item."



CHRONICLES OF THE SWORD Hints

► In some instances, you can miss an object because it's in a very dark part of the screen, while in other circumstances, you may well miss an exit to

another screen that has what you need. The "hot spots" are far from consistent. Sometimes, they cover a generous area and sometimes the area is narrow, so be patient. (And you thought the days of "look for the hidden pixel" were over!) ► It's likely you'll have trouble with the dragon egg, for instance. It's hard to

see that the exit to the next wave is a small hot spot at the extreme right of the screen (even I missed it the first time). At the Skull Bridge to avoid a similar problem, don't bypass the necessary pole two screens back. It is extremely difficult to see on the dark screen, among all the other poles



SCRATCH IN LINE

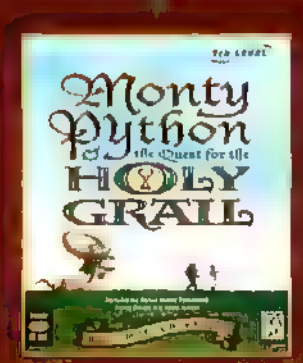
"I am in your general direction"

7TH LEVEL

MONTY PYTHON AND THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL

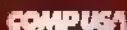
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(THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR PUTTING THE SMELL IN THIS MAGAZINE HAVE BEEN SACKED.)



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ALL LOGOS

***continued from page 104

The picture quality is good overall, though the TV tuner was less than stellar. VCR picture quality was better, but we did see some aliasing ("jaggies") during close-up viewing caused by the Brooktree's video scaler chip. However, the aliasing became much less noticeable when viewing from more typical distances. Destination's monitor has a maximum resolution of 800x600, though you probably wouldn't want to squint at tiny fonts displayed at 1024x768.

YEAH, WHAT ABOUT GAMES?

For the gamer, Gateway didn't quite put all the finishing touches on the Destination. We had to manually configure the DOSSTART.BAT file so that real-mode drivers for the CD-ROM, mouse, and sound card would be there for playing DOS titles in MS-DOS Mode. And though Gateway provides several batch files for setting up the S1B sound card's Sound Blaster emulation, they're too many in number, and not necessarily intuitive. Also Destination's mixer applet has confusing labels on its controls that don't clearly indicate what they're controlling. For example, there are redundant sliders that control Wave audio output.

Destination's wireless controls are a great idea, and work pretty well most of the time. Both the keyboard and the Field Mouse can control the TV tuner, enabling spousal remote control duels.

Rather than using infra-red, which requires line-of-sight alignment of transmitter and receiver, Destination's controls use radio-frequency signaling. The controls didn't quite require line-of-sight, but they did get sluggish at times when they weren't aligned in sight of the receiver. The keyboard's track-pad mouse control and the remote controls roller-ball are good for little more than menu navigation in action titles, but Gateway did put a PS/2 mouse-port on the keyboard where you can attach a regular mouse, though they didn't include one. Destination doesn't ship with rechargeable batteries for the keyboard and Field Mouse though they would be a welcome addition, as would a recharger.

For joystick users, Gateway provides a six-foot 15-pin "extension cord," which

allows two joysticks to be connected. But we found that one of the connections didn't work at all, and the other didn't provide a C1 Flightstick Pro with full functionality. The Flightstick Pro's hat switch didn't work correctly in DOS, and the stick didn't work at all in Windows 95 when connected through this extension cord. Running direct solved the problem, but it defeated the purpose of the cord.

Now the good news: Destination turned in some good WinBench numbers, though graphics performance was pretty sluggish (see table). In DOS, Destination did well running F1F2000, LONGROW, and Duke Nukem 3D, delivering smooth frame rates, and playing



MISSION CONTROL: Destination's keyboard and Field Mouse are ideal for the couch-inclined

these titles on a 31-in. monitor with big stereo sound was pretty exhilarating. One sure note here: FLIGHT UNLIMITED crashed repeatedly. And because we couldn't resist, we put in a network card and ran the QUAK! Deathmatch repeatedly, and again Destination delivered.

In Windows 95, MIGHTY WARRIOR 2, which uses Direct Draw, ran very smoothly, and here again, the big picture and big sound really make the game that much more visceral.

THE BIG PICTURE

Gateway has gotten a lot right with Destination, though its irksome rough edges made for a fair amount of manual

configuration that shouldn't have been necessary. Gateway's other problem is that all of their business is through mail-order, so the Destination might be a tough sell because of its dual role as computer and home entertainment system. Most home entertainment equipment buyers want to go into a store and bang on the box before they buy it. Sony announced at PC Expo that they're getting into the personal computer market and, given their established presence in the AA retail channel, they're a natural to develop a Destination-like system. Other players are almost certain to bring out similar systems, though we've heard no announcements to date. So while others are scheming, Destination is here now.

Another concern is the glaring absence of any 3D graphics hardware. And because of the integrated TV tuner, Gateway's only option with this configuration is a 3D-only solution, though no such plans were announced at press time.

In summary, Destination will get you most of the way there, leaving you to tighten the last few screws. The 31-in. monitor and beefy audio system can really take action games to another level, and though its TV-specific components and controls weren't the best, they get the job done. If you've got a hankering for a really big picture and thundering audio—and aren't afraid to shell out major cash—you may have a date with Destination. **S**

APPEAL: Home theater and gaming enthusiasts who want a PC they can drive from the couch.

PROS: Big picture, great audio with optional amplifier, speedy performance running DOS games.

CONS: Gamers will have to contend with some annoying rough edges. Not for the financially impaired.



WinBench 95 Test Results

| | CPU Mark16 | CPU Mark32 | Graphics WinMark | Disk WinMark |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Gateway Destination 166 MHz | 316 | 325 | 21.1 ¹ | 1070 |
| Zephyr Onyx 166 MHz | 305 | 300 | 28 ² | 791 |
| Falcon Northwest Mach V 166 MHz | 328 | 331 | 28.4 ¹ | 1080 |

¹ screen resolution: 640x480x256 colors

² screen resolution: 800x600x256 colors

Get A Clue

The Queen of Arachnids Decrypts Those Puzzles For You

Well, the mail sacks were overflowing this month, so let's rip 'em open and jump right in! **ANVIL OF DAWN:** There are two ways over the chasm: by going through Gorge Keep or by

way of the Elder Tree. It doesn't especially matter which route you take, although if you go the Tree route, Gorge Keep becomes superfluous. It has nothing important, except maybe experience if you need some. However, if you cross by the tree and enter the Keep by the back door, do *not* operate the winch. Early versions of the game have a bug that will prevent you from leaving by rear exit again, and you'll have a very long walk to the tree to get back over the chasm.

DARK SEED 2: Those who have managed to get into the back room of the

Morgue (cheery place) are having a bit of difficulty in obtaining the key from around the corpse's neck. This is an instance (one of many in the game) where conversations with the right people can help a lot. The carnival is the place for the answer here. Especially for seeing double and looking into the future. When you've taken care of that, getting the key won't be a puzzle.

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER II: A number of people have asked about the "nightmare level," where the party can't rest. Sorry to say, it's true: there just isn't any place down there where it's safe to sack out. Once you enter the level (preferably at max health and spells), you must go through the entire thing as quickly as possible (with plenty of saves), and with as little damage to the party as you can manage. There is no other way. Fortunately, this is the only time you have to worry about being unable to rest in the game.

GABRIEL KNIGHT 2: Some of you are having a hard time getting into the basement of the Hunt Club. The key to the door is, of course, in the desk, but how to get rid of Xavier? You'd be cuckoo to try for the keys while he's around. So I guess you'll just have to plant something in the vicinity, and hope for the best.

I HAVE NO MOUNT: Cornister (and a few adventurers) are having some difficulties in handling the unslip safely. Just ripping open some of the gas bags isn't quite enough, as they've found out the hard way (heh). A little sabotage is called for here. You have to gum up the works, only there's no gum, so it's time to think of something else.

RIPPER: Decrypting Catherine's journal can be a problem for a number of people. First, you won't find the key until Act II of the game. Second, it isn't in a very likely spot; you could easily look at

the word and not realize what it is. So, as you read various items in Act II, keep in mind that you want something astrological, no matter where you see it.

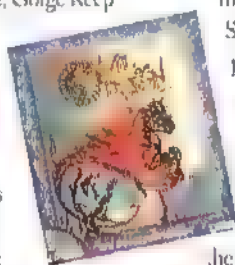
SHANNARA: Some folks may be having a little trouble healing up King Menion in Leah. Most of the ingredients are easy enough to come by, but the cloves are another matter. They don't seem to be around anywhere. Remember that cloves are a spice, and sometimes spices are used as air fresheners.

STONEKEEP: Here's a handy tip for those times when you don't want to get up close and personal with some of the critters: throw arrows! My friend Petra Schlunk (whose work you've seen right here in these pages) told me about this, and it works amazingly well. The arrows are much better than rocks, and kill monsters faster. Once you've gathered a few, try it out for yourself; I think you'll like the results.

For those who haven't started this game, or haven't gone too far with it yet, there's a terrific easter egg, right at the beginning. When

you're standing at the lever to open the door, pull it three times in a row. Turn around, step into the hall, and go around the corner left. About three or four walls down, on the left side, is a panel. Pulling the switch there opens a secret passage behind you. In the passage, on a left wall as you enter, is another panel. Behind that is a very powerful dagger, that will make most of the early (and even not-so-early) combats much easier. Note, however, that this weapon is available *only* if you have not yet gone down the stairs! Once you've entered Stonekeep proper, the dagger is lost to you (my thanks to Roe Adams).

Until next time, happy adventuring! ☺



Read Something!

► **AOL (new!).** ScorpiA's Lair (keyword: ScorpiA).

► **Delphi.** GameSIG (Groups and Clubs menu).

► **GEnie.** Games RoundTable (type: ScorpiA)

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MacUser - "Like all really great games, Loony Lab has a high just-one-more-try factor." (Rating 4.5/5)

Inside Mac Games - "...not only one of the best vid pins ever, but one of the greatest Macintosh games of all time." (Rating 4.5/5)

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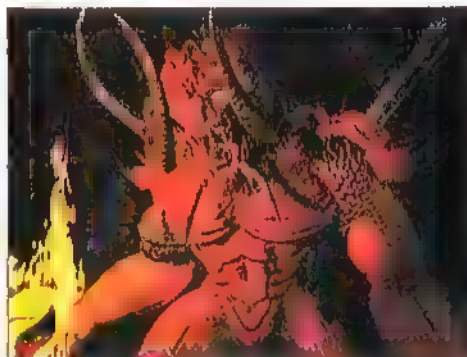
Blizzard Conjures What Could Be The Year's Best Action-RPG

by Elliott Chin

CG SNEAK PREVIEW
GAME STILL IN DEVELOPMENT

Let's be honest. Role-playing games have been pretty bad these past few years. In fact, CGW could only find two RPGs to nominate for the 1995 Premier Awards, and we had to do a lot of digging. The good news, though, is that the drought will end soon. This fall, a host of great RPGs will be coming to the PC, some of them sequels, like *RETURN TO KRONOR*, and some of them incredible originals.

Leading the renaissance is Blizzard, the folks who brought you *WARCRAFT II*, who will be taking the plunge into the shallow waters of RPGs with their first role-playing game, *DIABLO*. Due for a September release, *DIABLO* is an action-oriented RPG that is beautiful, full of depth and yet



THE REAL DIABLO All those red demons you've seen before aren't Diablo, they're his minions. Here's a first look at Diablo himself, and he is one mean sucker.

fully accessible to non-traditional gamers. Many have been waiting for this game with bated breath, and now that we've had a chance to play the alpha, we are too.

SO WHAT'S THE STORY?

As of this preview, Blizzard had yet to create a back story to *DIABLO*. What is known so far is that your village and family have been annihilated by a demon called Diablo, whose foul presence has unleashed a horde of evil upon the world. Your quest is to venture into his lair, battle his minions and vanquish him. As with any good RPG, many mini-quests will pop up along the way which you are free to solve or ignore in any

order you choose.

Before you begin, though, you must choose your alter-ego. There are no alternate races, only humans, but you can choose your class. Previous reports indicated that the three classes would be Warrior, Sorcerer and Archer, but Blizzard notes that the Archer class has been removed. Most game testers either favored the brute force of the Warrior or the magic of the Sorcerer, and Blizzard felt that there was nothing to distinguish the Archer. He has since been replaced by a female Rogue who is fairly good in both magic and melee and possesses a few unique talents, such as a larger sight radius and the ability to detect traps and secret doors better than the other two classes.

INTO THE DARKNESS

DIABLO is a different RPG for many reasons. The first one that will hit you is the gorgeous graphics. *DIABLO*'s look isn't the first-person perspective of modern-



MONSTER MASH *DIABLO*'s monsters are tough and varied. A quick sword and swift magic might save you from the monstrous circle at the right, but the Butcher will require more thinking to beat.

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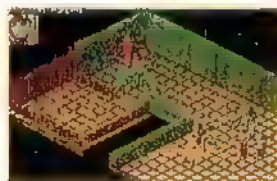
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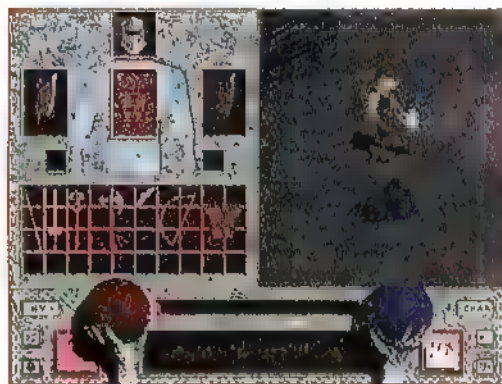
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A WELCOME SPLIT Both the character stats and inventory menus are half screen, allowing you to access them without disturbing the flow of the game.

day RPGs, but an isometric view as in *CRUSADER: NO REMORSE*. The graphics are SVGA and the characters and monsters are 3D rendered, with a beautiful and very realistic appearance. I found this view both refreshing and immensely satisfying, especially when I got to see my warrior in crisp SVGA, hefting his mighty

ax over his head and cleaving a shambling zombie in half.

Monsters also move in great detail. Zombies limp slowly down corridors, the mischievous Fallen Ones jump up and down like the frantic little pests they are, and skeletons, when destroyed, scatter into loose bones on the floor. And because the graphics are high-resolution and clean, you can see every little detail in the creatures, not to mention the brick-by-brick textures of the walls and floor.

DIABLO also employs impressive light-sourcing to create a dungeon environment that is dark and gloomy. But your character has a range-of-sight that illuminates the darkness as if he carried a torch. As you move, your illuminated range moves with you. Torches and kimps also cast their own spheres of radiance; you can see the flames flickering and the shadows from the light dancing on the walls. Fireballs and lightning bolts likewise can dispel the darkness, casting their own

radius of light as they fly down corridors.

The sounds I heard were excellent, especially those of the clattering bones when you destroy a skeleton. Although there was no music in our alpha version, it will be added in the final version.

MENUS FOR THE MASSES

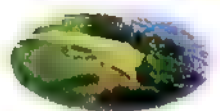
The interface in *DIABLO*, unlike in many RPGs, is very natural. You move around the dungeon by mouse-clicking where you want to go. In combat, you attack with the left-click, and cast spells with the right mouse button. Changing equipment is simply a drag-and-drop procedure in the inventory menu. At the bottom of the screen is a bar with a red globe for health, a blue globe for mana, and an icon for your currently selected spell. There's also a display for information on items you pick up, monsters selected and movable objects, like doors or chests.

DIABLO's inventory menu and charac-



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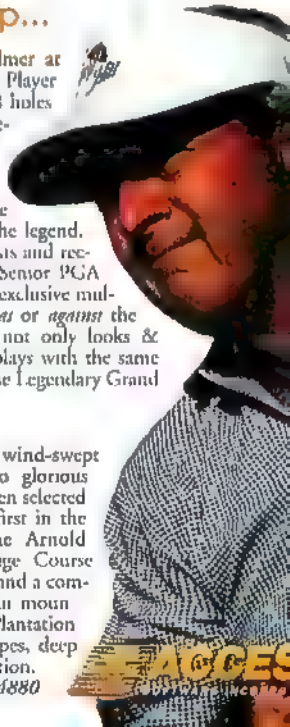


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ter stats menu are pretty straightforward. Best of all, each menu only takes up half of the screen, so you can switch equipment or look at your stats without disturbing the flow of the game.

REAL COMBAT

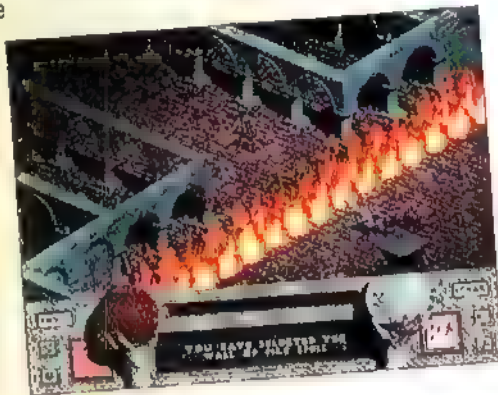
DIABLO's combat is in real-time and is very action-oriented, meaning battles can get pretty frantic at times. However, just because the combat is real-time doesn't mean it's a matter of who clicks fastest. Different weapons and different monsters have to observe different speed factors. The sabre is faster than the ax, but slower than the shortstaff. If you think you'll be able to click on the mouse really fast to make yourself hit faster, think again. Every click begins a new strike, so if you keep on clicking, you'll just be interrupting your swing before your weapon connects. Also, if you get hit while taking a swing, you'll be knocked back and your attack will be interrupted. Many monsters

At the time of this writing, DIABLO's spell system was being overhauled. In an earlier version of the game, characters gained spells automatically with each level advance. But that's been changed, so that you'll start out with one or two spells and have to find the rest on your own.

There will be two ways to expand your repertoire of spells: by locating spell books, which you can find in the various levels of the dungeon, or by studying at the mage guild in the town. After a period of memorization, the spell will then become available to you. Since DIABLO is in real-time, this will probably mean that once you discover a spell book, you won't be able to cast it until a certain period of time has passed. More powerful spells will, of course, also require that you be at both a certain level and have sufficient ability scores to handle the magic.

You'll also be able to cast spells from items such as scrolls, rings and staves. These spells won't draw any mana from you but will use up charges from the respective item. With all the types of spells at your disposal, spell-casting could get confusing, but

Blizzard will implement a spell inventory akin to the character stats and inventory menu. The spell inventory will be divided into separate categories for spells in memory, in scrolls or in staves. Each spell will be represented by an icon, which can be dragged and dropped to your current spell selection. In this way, you can choose to either cast a spell from memory, exhaust your scrolls first or use up your magic staves. You will also be able to simply cycle through spells without having to go through the menu by hitting a hot key.



2

LEVELS
OF PLAY

3

NARRATIVE
PATHS

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DIFFERENT
ENDINGS

THE
Pandora
DIRECTIVE

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UNIQUE
INTERACTIONS

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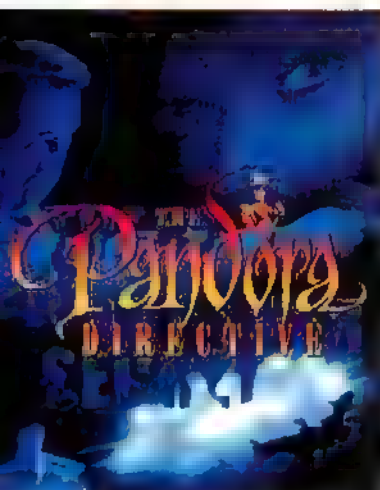
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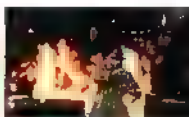
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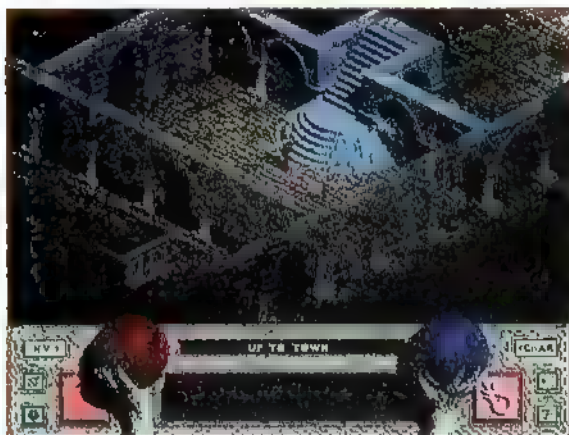
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THESE DUNGEON WALLS Diablo's levels will have several looks. The first few levels will be stone dungeons, but the lower levels will be volcanic caverns and pits befitting a devil.

will also gang up on you and hit you repeatedly from all sides, so that you won't be able to muster a swing at all. To say the least, combat will probably be frustrating for the less action-oriented RPG fan.

In those cases where the enemy is too fast or numerous, you'll have to employ your wits to win battles, leading your opponent to a door where you can hack them down single-file or casting spells from a distance. And if the enemies are still too powerful, no one says you have to fight them at all. Just ignore them and move onto the next mini-quest.

When you do down a creature, though, sometimes you'll see it release a few coins or items as it collapses. Click on them to gain treasure and new weapons and armor.

Aside from the real-time component, combat is also very challenging thanks to a tough monster AI.

Even in the alpha, monsters exhibited good intelligence—attacking in numbers, ducking behind walls to shield themselves from possible fireballs, and employing surround tactics to beat me repeatedly from all sides. The monsters

will even wait for you to cast spells, and then dodge until you catch on or lose your mana.

To help you with the challenging combat, Blizzard has decided to regenerate your health automatically. The regeneration is still slow, so you will have to hide in a room for a few minutes to recover all your health. I liked this, though, because otherwise it would be impossible to get past the first few monsters you encounter. This feature may rankle a few role-playing purists, but I look at it as the real-time equivalent of spending a night resting in a turn-based RPG.

MY GENERATION

DIABLO has two other features that really set it apart from the rest of the role-playing pack: random dungeon generation and multiplayer support.

The dungeons in DIABLO are never laid out the same way twice. There is a randomizer that places monsters, chests,

THE EVOLUTION OF CIVILIZATION



rooms and even NPCs at random, so that each time you play, you get a different dungeon to roam through. What will have you coming back to play over and over, though, is the random quest generation. Blizzard says *DIABLO* will have a database of 30 mini-quests, and from six to eight will be randomly generated from this pool per new game. While the quest to destroy Diablo is constant, each individual game will be different because you could have entirely new mini-quests to complete.

The biggest of *DIABLO*'s many amazing features, though, is its multiplayer support. *DIABLO* will support up to four people over a local-area network or on Blizzard's upcoming, free "battle.net" gaming service, meaning you and your friends will be able to delve into *DIABLO*'s dungeons together. Yes, you can engage in deathmatches, backstabbing your friends and stealing their treasure, but, even better, you'll be able to quest through the whole game together as one

party, mixing character classes and teaming up on the bosses and tough monsters along the way, until you all face down Diablo together.

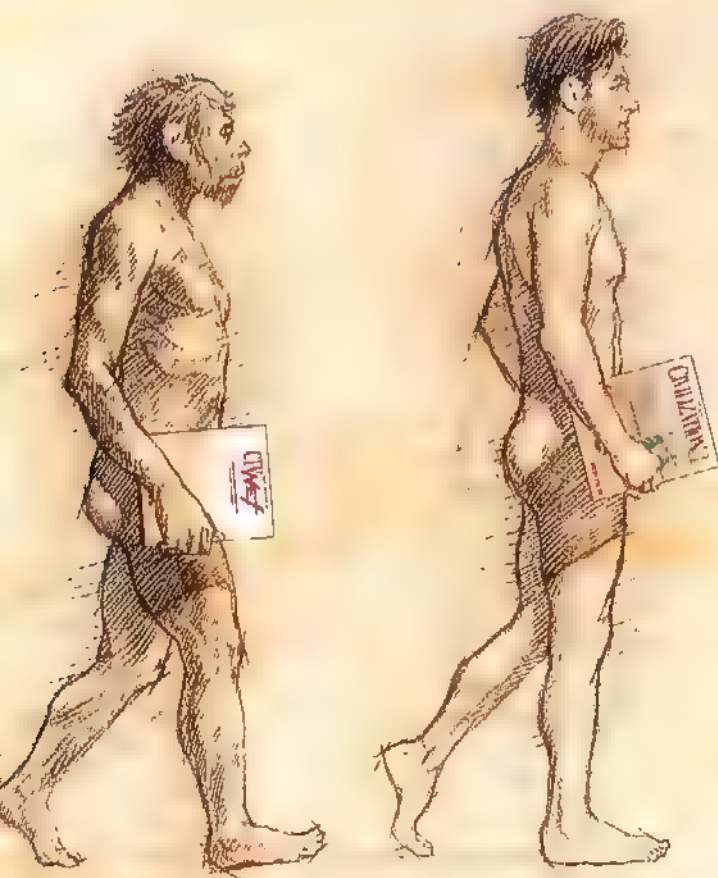
This is really one of *DIABLO*'s most exciting selling points, bringing back the interaction that has thus far only been found on true tabletop RPGs. *DIABLO* will be the first stand-alone RPG to offer gamers a chance to roam a dungeon with a friend and collectively track evil minions to death, just like in a classic *Dungeons & Dragons* campaign session.

Blizzard was very successful in mixing genres with *WARCRAFT* and *WARCRAFT II*. *DIABLO*, with its mix of action and role-playing, also looks like a winning formula. Non-RPG gamers, and many action gamers in particular, are sure to feel right at home with the real-time combat, friendly interface and rich, beautiful SVGA graphics. Traditional RPG fans needn't worry about a diluted role-player either, as *DIABLO* has a healthy dose of



CLOSE-UP The characters and monsters are rather small but for close-range fights or to inspect objects close-up you can zoom into the map

non-linear adventure, side quests, character development and dungeon exploration. When you mix in the incredible multiplayer support and random level and quest generation, you end up with a game that, if it lives up to its promise, will definitely going to be in the running for Best RPG of the year.



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Four Funerals And A Wedding

Activision Takes Venerable Text Adventure Franchise Into Mysty Waters

by Charles Arday

First things first: I promise that for the remainder of this review I won't bitch about how remote the connection is between ZORK NEMESIS and any of the classic text adventures that proudly bore the Zork name many years ago. What's the point? It's like complaining that they don't write novels any more the way *Tollope* used to, or that roadways sure were safer before you had all these horseless carriages zooming across them. Time moves on, and so must we.

Modern gamers want (or at least game companies think they want) to play *Myst* over and over again. Give 'em a gorgeous photorealistic environment full of fantastic landscapes, some quasi-liturgical groaning on the soundtrack, and a simple puzzle every so often to keep their brains engaged, and you'll be off to the bank to count your riches.

Throw in some ghostly visions and a hint of the horrific and you can snag the 711 *GUEST* crowd, too.

Anyway, that's how I explain ZORK NEMESIS. The story here—part fantasy, part horror—is that a quartet of alchemists has been murdered and is now in some sort of magical suspended anima-

tion, being tormented by a demon called "the Nemesis." The alchemists ask you to go on a series of quests to free them. Along the way, you get to chop the head off a corpse, handle a severed hand, receive shock therapy and watch some acts of really awful violence. You get to soar over a waterfall, race through a rocky trench, drive a tank and ride a mine car. You get to explore catacombs and corridors, conservatories and caves. And you get to face off against four or five dozen of the tamest puzzles it's ever been my pleasure to encounter. Mostly what you do is unlock doors. This is usually a matter of lining up a pair of astrological symbols, or

Anderson. Do we really have to abandon the cleverness, style and wit of the former in order to get the voluptuous visual appeal of the latter?

RETURN TO ZORK

The last time we saw the Great Underground Empire, it was in the clutches of a fiend called Morphus. The game was Activision's *RETURN TO ZORK*, their first revival of the then-moribund Zork franchise. That game had some pronounced design weaknesses—navigation was choppy and disorienting, the scheme for communicating with other characters by clicking on "emotion icons" was indecipherable—but it was visually stunning and developed quite a following. So what if no one could make sense of the story? This may be the picture-postcard way of looking at things, more graphic design than game design, but heck, millions of postcards are sold every year, so it can't be a bad business to be in.

For ZORK NEMESIS, Activision has kept their "pretty pictures *uber alles*" philosophy, but they've eliminated or smoothed over all the problem areas that made the earlier game such a chore. For instance, movement is now more fluid than before: each location allows the player to view the surroundings in a fluid, 360-degree pan. Forward movement, from one location to another, still occurs in discrete leaps, so this is not a *DOOM*-style (or *UNDER A KILLING MOON*-style) environment that you can explore freely, but it's still a great improvement over *RETURN TO ZORK*.

As for character interaction, there isn't any. There are barely any characters other than the four alchemists, and they're dead. While they still talk to you from



DIE YOUNG, STAY PRETTY This fetching spirit is one of the characters—mostly dead—who urge you on in the game. You can't talk back, though, and spend most of your time alone.

something similarly uninspired. You've also got the usual sorts of adventure game effluvia: pull the levers in the right order, push the buttons in the right order, turn the knobs in the right order and so on.

What I want to know is, when did adventure games become so beautiful and so dull? Over the past 10 years we've gone from Dorothy Parker to Pamela



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time to time, it's only in non-interactive video segments that play when you click on their sarcophagi. You do meet a few other stray characters—such as a monk in a monastery who goes mad before your eyes—but they aren't characters so much as set decoration.

What ZORK NEMESIS does have is graphic excellence. The five main areas for you to explore—the Inn of the Nemesis and each alchemist's demeane—are beautifully rendered. Every room in every location, including

to another—your heart races.

The only downside to the abundance of graphic detail is that it's sometimes hard to notice everything in a scene that you can interact with. Some important objects blend into the background and go unnoticed. As in most games, the cursor changes shape when it passes over a "hot" spot on the screen, and this does help a little; but some of the critical hot spots are still too easy to miss.

A bigger problem is that, when you do find the hot spots, the interactions are very

limited. Almost all the objects you pick up (and there aren't a whole lot) are used on the same screen or one of the very next screens you come to. So, when you find a coin on the ground outside the monastery, you can be pretty sure you'll find a coin slot just inside the front door. If you find a key, you can be confident the keyhole is somewhere nearby.

While a little of this is good, the extent to which ZORK NEMESIS uses this simplifying tactic is disappointing.

When a puzzle doesn't require the use of an object, it is almost invariably a purely mechanical exercise. The game is full of very simple codes that aren't much fun to decipher and very simple processes that aren't much fun to step through. There are occasional moments of cleverness, but too few. You find a long-lost treasure by opening a coffin, lying down inside it and pulling it shut over you (The treasure is on the underside of the coffin lid.) In the Nemesis' temple, a time travel room allows you to collect an icicle in the Ice Age and melt it in a volcanic era to get the pure water you need for a ritual. This is good stuff. But the bad puzzles outnumber the good by at least five to one.

The final element in the game is the story, which unfolds in video vignettes triggered by clicking on various objects and documents. Aside from the bad acting and the fact that they are not interactive, the video segments are fine. But the

documents—mostly personal letters from one alchemist to another, plus some diaries and books—are far too numerous and mind-numbing. You sometimes find a half-dozen letters in a single room, and pretty much have to read all of them.

A family saga of sorts unfolds, something about how one alchemist's daughter wanted to marry another's son, but the intricate family politics the designers try to craft misfires—you end up merely confused. Whose son is Larcien? What is Sophia's relationship to Kaine? It's all like a particularly ornate soap opera of which you have missed the first few episodes. You're continually racing to catch up and, worse still, the nice rhythm of the gameplay stops dead whenever you run across large chunks of text to read.

ZORK ETHIC

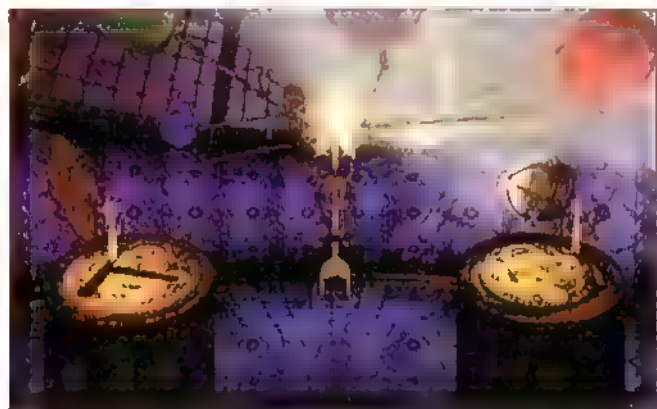
It's ironic that a perennial defender of text adventures would complain about having to wade through text. But there is a difference between text that paints a scene or tells a story and text that merely lards on extra layers of exposition, just as there is a difference between a puzzle that challenges a player's resourcefulness or imagination and one that merely challenges his patience.

ZORK NEMESIS is a pleasure to watch and has glimmering moments of promise, but a well-told story and a consistently inspired caliber of gameplay are two things it hasn't got. You'll probably show off your favorite scenes to your friends—I did—but I doubt you'll tell them about your favorite puzzle, the way we used to talk, in the old days, about catching the Babel Fish or the death of Floyd. **C**

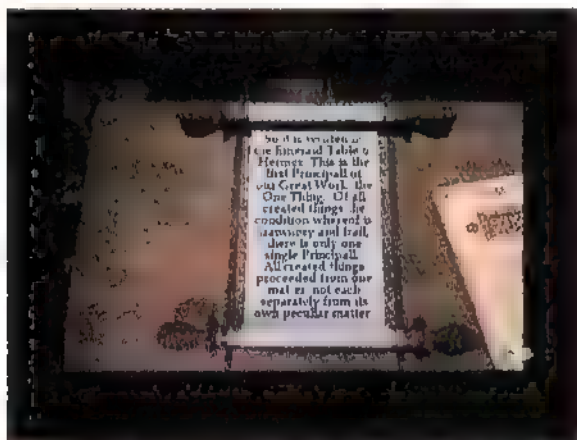
APPEAL: Fans of *Myst* and *Buried in Time* will gobble up this photo-realistic fantasy adventure.

PROS: The visuals are truly stunning and the feeling of immersion in another world is delivered well.

CONS: Too many dull "filler" puzzles, the too-ornate-to-care-about story-line, and too much text bog down the game. Some strong horror content feels inappropriate.



WHAT'S YOUR ORRERY? Virtually every frame of Zork Nemesis is a highly detailed, beautifully rendered work of art, such as this colorful orrery.



TEXT ADVENTURE Despite all the hi-falutin' graphics, you'll actually spend a lot of your time reading text to figure out the story. Who says text adventures are dead?

the secret passageways and laboratories they all seem to conceal, is like a miniature painting. It's all rendered with great care and skill, down to the smallest architectural details. And when the occasional animations kick in—for instance, when you soar from one of the major locations

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Indiana Jones Meets His Doom In *DESKTOP ADVENTURES*

by Charles Ardai

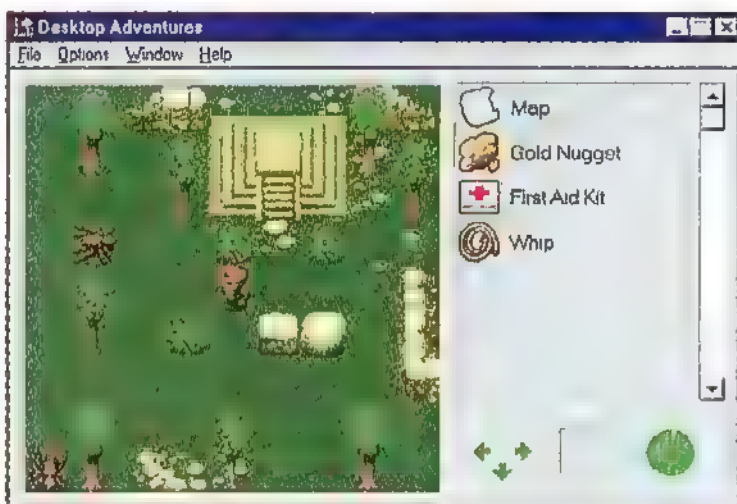
For a genius, George Lucas sure has a lot of bad ideas. *I Howard the Duck*, or *Radioland Murders*, or hiring the *I Howard the Duck* screenwriters to pen the script for *Temple of Doom*. When will Lucas learn to recognize a bad idea when he sees one? Not soon enough, I say. Some time

ago, someone from his computer game division must have come to him and said, "Hey, let's put out a really simple, randomly generated RPG-style adventure game, stick a whip in the hand of the main character, use the Indiana Jones name—and make it look really ugly." And Lucas must have said, "Sounds good to me."

DOWN MEXICO WAY

INDIANA JONES AND HIS *DESKTOP ADVENTURES* looks like one of the early *ULTIMA* games. Everything has a strange perspective, a sort of cross between an overhead and side view. Indy is a little, squarish lump in a foreshortened fedora, and your main activity is moving that lump across a grid-like terrain. From time to time you come across buildings, which you enter by bumping against the doorway; the scene then switches to a blueprint-style overhead view reminiscent of the original *CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN*, showing top-down images of walls, tables, beds, Nazis, rugs, chairs, and so forth.

The setting is 1930s Mexico, so in addition to Nazis you've got bandoliered banditos and loinclothed natives to contend with, plus—*awee!*—giant scorpions and spiders. Marcus Brody assigns you the inevitable quest: those bad Nazis are after a jade jaguar mask, and you have to find it first. Also, Pacal Hunac has been kidnapped and you have to rescue him (never mind that you have no idea who he is). To get you started, here are...a metal



FORGET SHORTY Much like the old pop ditty, *INDY'S DESKTOP ADVENTURES* sounds tinny and looks out of place in today's market.

file, bamboo pole and a funeral mask. "Thanks a lot, Marcus. Then you're on your way, hunting through screen after screen of desert, forest, and jungle, dodging attacks from vireons and sundry meanies, in pursuit of your goal."

Like the quest, the landscape is randomly generated anew each game. As you explore, you run into random fights, puzzles, and sub-quests. So, there *are* "literally billions of possible games!" as the game's package proudly proclaims. Problem is, it isn't worth playing even once or twice. To fight, just point Indy in the direction of an adversary and click the right mouse button, unless the bad guy moves, he's a goner—literally. Puzzles are equally "challenging." A branch moves a boulder out of your path; a key opens a locked door. Sub-quests are a parody of customary adventure game barter: "I'd be happy if I could be playing my favorite songs," says one jungle dweller, "but I need a *CULTAR*! Your assistance would be worth a small fortune in gold *DOUBLOONS*." Fetch and carry, Indy.

What else is there to do? Some of the forest scenes are maze-like, while other locations require you to pull huge stone

blocks into position or push them out of your way. Some runes teleport you from one part of the map to another. You find herbs and bananas when your life meter goes from green to yellow or red. A loafing Mexican named Bonifacio dispenses gameplay tips from the town square; a barmaid named Gabriella pours tequila; and a hut dweller named Jose hands over medicinal plants with great reluctance. With these caricatures, be thankful that LucasArts didn't set the game in Africa. There's almost nothing redeeming about the game, except maybe the picture of Harrison Ford on the splash screen—and even that is a steal from *Temple of Doom*. You need a 486 and 8 MB of RAM for this? ☹

APPEAL: Indy fans may get a kick out of the familiar theme music.

PROS: Games are short, if you're that hard up for a lunchtime diversion.

CONS: Embarrassingly retro; overly simplistic gameplay; crude visuals and sound; ludicrous ethnic stereotypes.



Price: \$19.95

System Requirements: IBM compatible 486-33 or better, Windows 3.1 or better, 8 MB RAM, 256-color graphics, 3 MB hard drive space, Windows compatible sound.

Protection: None
Designers: Hal Barwood, Wayne Cline, Mark Crowley, Paul Lefevre, Tom Payne

Publisher: LucasArts, San Rafael, CA (800) 985-8227
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DIFFICULTY LEVEL

EASY

Phasers On Annoy

Arcade Sequences Make This Trek Drone On Too Long

by Denny Atkin

When a game sorely tempts you to toss your new, really expensive laptop out the window, that's

a good sign that there's an infuriating design flaw. When that single design flaw ruins what would otherwise be a very enjoyable game, it's doubly annoying. Such is the case with *STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE: HARBINGER*, from Viacom NewMedia. An intriguing storyline, a decent set of puzzles and voiceovers from many of the actors from the television show set the game up as one of the better attempts at adventure gaming in the *Star Trek* universe. Unfortunately, a series of repulsive, out-of-place and just plain frustrating arcade sequences bring the game down.



STONEFACED SISKI The 3D-rendered characters are a bit stiff, but the effect is better than in previous attempts.

HABITAT RING

It's a real shame, because parts of this game are extremely good. You play the role of Fawcett Bannik, sent to space station Deep Space Nine to assist the crew in a first-contact situation with the

Scythians. As you approach the station, you're attacked by a huge flock of drone spaceships. As the story unfolds, you'll work with the DS9 crew to solve the mystery of the drones, catch a murderer or two, and ensure the survival of an alien race. All in a day's work for a Federation envoy.

Most of the DS9 actors appear here in voiceover roles. Only O'Brien, Bashir and Jake Sisko are missing

The "guest star" design works very well—it's a lot of fun to inter-act with Sisko, Quark, Dax and the others. Overall, the voice acting is very well done, with the odd exception of your character, Bannik. Whether his life is in danger or he's flirting with a Dabo girl, his tone remains equally uninterested. Armin Shimerman puts in a particularly good performance as Quark, whose greed—not surprisingly—ends up making your journey more challenging than expected.

The characters, like all the elements in the game, are 3D rendered. Their stiff movements and stone faces make them look like puppet refuges from the old *Chevy Chase* *Thunderheads*. Super! Motion picture TV series. That said, they look a lot better than the 3D models used in *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*. Inter-act how, you "pick from

continued on page 136 >>>



Price \$49.99

System Requirements:

486 66 or better, DOS 5.0, 8 MB RAM, 10 MB hard disk space, VESA-compliant SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM mouse, Sound Blaster compatible sound card

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: Stormfront Studios

Publisher: Viacom NewMedia

New York, NY

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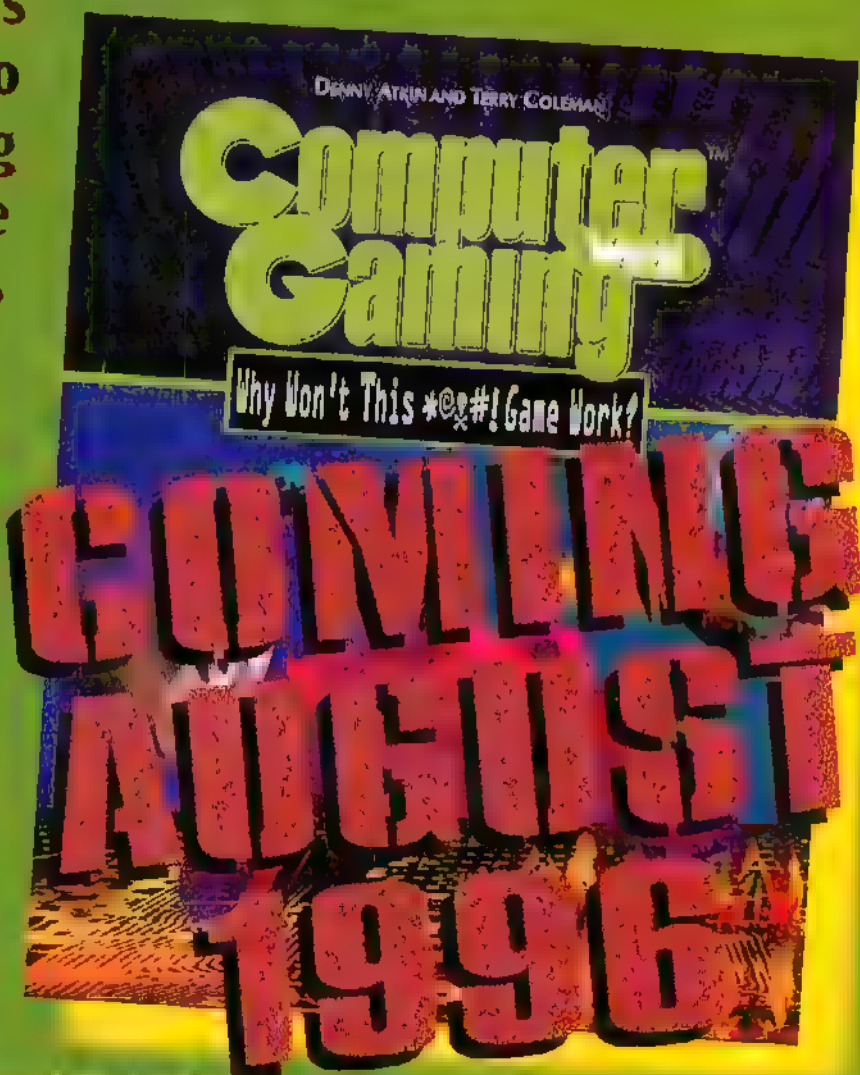
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►►► continued from page 130

a group of responses type with a small real-time element added, some characters will react differently depending on the pace of your responses.

The game's dialog is very well done, and there's some real humor here. HARBINGER's writer, Sarah Stocker, worked with prolific Trekscripster Hilary J. Bader on the script. The result of his collaboration is a story

with consistent plotting, unexpected twists and humorous breaks from convention. In fact, HARBINGER's storyline is one of the better original pieces of science fiction I've encountered in a computer game—it's a better story than most regular DS9 episodes.

OPS AND COMMAND

Unfortunately, while it's a great story, it's also a very linear one. There's only one path in this game, winning or otherwise, and there are no big decisions to make along the way. You'll do four things in the game: explore DS9 and an alien station, interact with other characters, solve puzzles and brave a barrage of arcade sequences.

The puzzles are well done. At first I was a bit disturbed, as they appeared to be *The 7th Guest*-style puzzles disguised as efforts to repair Starfleet equipment. But surprisingly, they work in this environment—who's to say repairing an ODN Conduit wouldn't be a little like playing *Pipe Dream*?

Unfortunately, the exploration doesn't hold together as well. You use arrow pointers to navigate a series of Myst-style pre-rendered frames. It's not always obvious which path you need to take to get around an object, and in the game it took me about three minutes just to get from one end of Ops to another to talk to Dax. You'll get the hang of it

after a few hours of play, but it certainly could have been made more intuitive.

Where the game really falls apart, though, is in the arcade sequences. You'll start the game being attacked by drones; you'll spend the middle of the game fighting drones and you'll end the game attacking drones. You'll fight real drones, and you'll battle drones in a deck simulation. You'll fight drones in space and you'll fight them in hallways. Worst of all, you'll fight drones while you try to find your way through a multi-level maze. Even though the drones are convincingly integral to the plot, after a few encounters you'll *hate* drones.

It wouldn't be so bad if the arcade sequences were *fun*. But at their best they're rail shooters, where you move your mouse pointer and click to destroy drones while Kira pilots your runabout. At the worst, they're staple duck-shoots, where you stand in hallways and point the mouse at drones as they fly in from the sides of the screen. Add to that the fact that they're poorly programmed, with many action shots left unregistered, and you have a very annoying game element that pops up just often enough to suck most of the fun from the game quicker than the salt vampire from Planet Aphelion.

BEAM ME UP

It's a shame the arcade sequences are so poor and so ubiquitous, because otherwise HARBINGER is an enjoyable game. There's actually a really good story lying under the constant barrage of mouse-hand reflex tests and linear adventure quest.

APPEAL: Star Trek fans, gamers who need practice hitting the icons on the Windows desktop.

PROS: A great plot, original aliens, and good dialog; humor that works; beautifully rendered space station.

CONS: The linear storyline has lots of searches and puzzles, but little in the way of decision making. A near-endless barrage of dull, frustrating arcade sequences mars what could be a nice adventure diversion.



MEETING THE KLINGONS

It is hardly surprising that Klingons now walk the decks of *Star Trek: Voyager* and *Deep Space Nine*. At first considered a minor addition to *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, the Klingons have emerged as favorites among *Star Trek* fans. Now, in their continuing series of Trek-ware, Simon & Schuster has published *STAR TREK KLINGON*, for those who simply cannot get enough.

In this combination tutorial and role-playing adventure, you are Pok, a young Klingon on the verge of adulthood. You are to take part in a ceremony known as the Rite Of Ascension, a major family event made even more significant by the presence of Gowron, leader of the Klingon High Council. Unfortunately, a horrible act of sabotage ruins the celebration, leaving you to uncover the dishonorable wrong-doer and bring him to justice.

But before you begin, you are advised to take a tutorial on a separate CD designed to teach you some Klingon language and expressions. However, despite packaging advisories to the contrary, it is quite possible to complete the adventure without sitting

through the rigorous tutorial. In fact, it is somewhat of a dead-end, and probably not worth your time. Once finished, your only reward is the ability to speak to your Klingon buddies and advise them that the ship's engines are on fire.

The adventure itself contains lush production values and was directed by the talented Jonathan Frakes, who plays Wil Riker on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. The sets, music and special-effects are full and lavish, and reflect the same care that is taken with any of the television episodes. Indeed, the adventure flows like a television episode, except for certain "decision points" at which a cursor appears so that you can make a choice or manipulate an object. Unfortunately, there are far too few of these points, so that old feeling quickly sets in that you are watching the game rather than playing it.

Though it may be enjoyable to watch, there is simply no challenge here. The game can easily be completed in one sitting, after which you are left with no feeling of accomplishment, only Gowron's invitation to run the program again sometime. And that's not much of a reward. —by Allen Greenberg.



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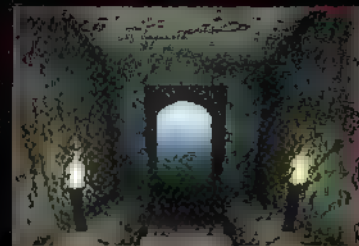
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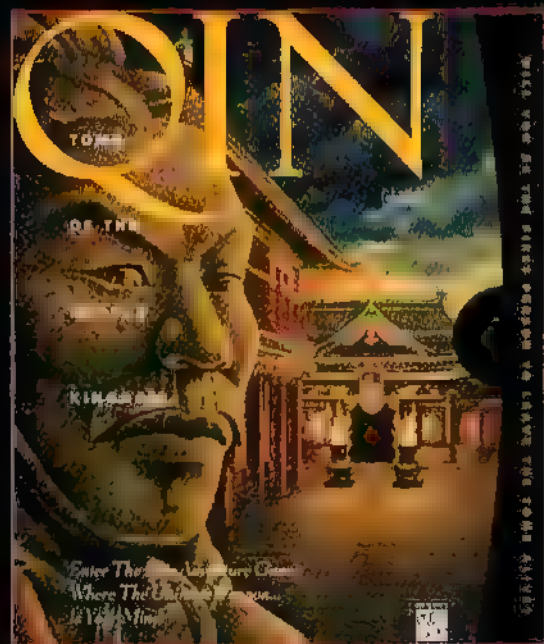
"Indiana Jones meets *Myst*"

—STEVEN GREENLIE
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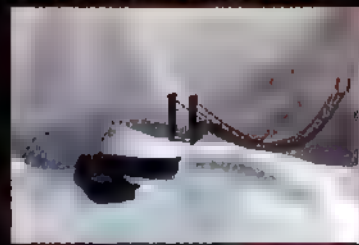
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There's A New Sheriff In Town

...And He's A Damn Good Shot: *VIRTUA COP* Targets The PC



Even Rodney Dangerfield would look down his nose at this genre. The shooting gallery has never gotten much respect, and

probably to this point hasn't deserved whatever respect it did get. Among computer-game genres, none is more like operating an interface—or participating in some modestly interactive demo—than this cybersideshow and its high-tech heir, the mil shooter. When these games have thrived, it has been chiefly on novelty value. *OPERATIONS WOLF* and *THE SPIDERHOLE* offered the novelty of a sideways-scrolling playfield. *MAD DOG MAC CREW* and its many children offered the novelty of FMV and novelty by itself is never enough.

For the truly best in

shooting gallery games, though, we need to go to the arcades, where the most spectacular games of this genre thrive. But for those gamers who can't or won't go to the arcades, the good news is that it will be coming to you. The shooting gallery market is about to have its tail twisted as



BANG, YOU'RE DEAD *Virtua City P.D.* is sure to be an action hit, with 3D polygonal graphics, great gameplay and an immersive environment

Virtua Cop—a huge arcade hit and a best-seller on Sega's 32-bit Saturn console—moves to the PC this fall in a native Windows 95 version. An early version, christened with the curious working title of *Virtua City P.D.*, suggests that this

October release from Sega Entertainment, Inc. (Sega's PC arm) should be a bust. This is the first immersive shooting gallery. This is the first one that genuinely matters.

It's the "kill 'em all and let God sort 'em out" approach to police work. Armed initially with nothing but a revolver, you're a cop assigned to break a gun-smuggling ring and your task is to penetrate three 3D levels: a dock-side warehouse, a quarry and the gang's glass-walled HQ.

You don't choose your path through this environment. It's scripted by the program. It moves you in short, smooth steps, stopping every few yards to allow you to exchange fire with unfriendlies. And there are lots of them—obscured behind glass in the truck cab, hopping out of that trailer in the background, just barely visible at the top of the stairs. The levels aren't especially large, but they are densely inhabited—populated with hundreds of textured polygonal enemies apparently on parole from *Virtua Fighter* and dressed alternately like homeboys, mechanics, special-forces troops and music-industry executives.

They don't like you much, these men in sunglasses, and if you don't take them

“ This is the first immersive shooting gallery on the PC. It's the first one that genuinely matters. ”

INSIDE ACTION What was originally planned as a big patch has turned into a whole new suit. Bethesda's *FUTURE SHOCK* followup, *SKYNET*'s *REVENGE*, is now just



I'LL BE BACK *SkyNET* should improve upon *FUTURE SHOCK*'s graphics with textured polygons and a true 3D environment as well as adding multiplayer capability

SKYNET. Look for this stand-alone autumn release to include new missions, multiplayer support, SVGA graphics and a neat new gadget: a motion detector similar to the one in "Aliens."

out, they will eagerly ventilate your visor. Five holes in your visor, and you can begin looking for a new line of work—as a medical endaver—or just hit the left mouse button again to use another credit, of which you have a maximum of nine (barring any cheat codes).

Finally, at the end of each level, you'll find a robust "boss" who makes a little gruff-voiced speech and fires barrages of

munitions, rifles and machine guns are out there for the finding—and, if you're exceptionally quick off the mark, you can also pick up the odd extra life. Some of these can be grabbed after you've gunned down the owner, and others lie hidden in crates, which first have to be destroyed by gunfire.

Oh, yes, the environment is *highly* combustible. You can shoot out the win-

VIRTUA CRIM PD something special?

Well, the 3D is a huge plus. It effectively puts you into this most removed of games. You won't be able to think of anything else. Moreover, while rail shooters like *CYBERIA 2* and *WITCHAMDS* like to throw vehicles into your path, here you're dealing with polygonal people. When shot, they recoil, or go down in a heap, as though they've really been shot, and sometimes go down on one knee, or hold an arm as though they've just been winged. This is personal, and that makes it compelling.

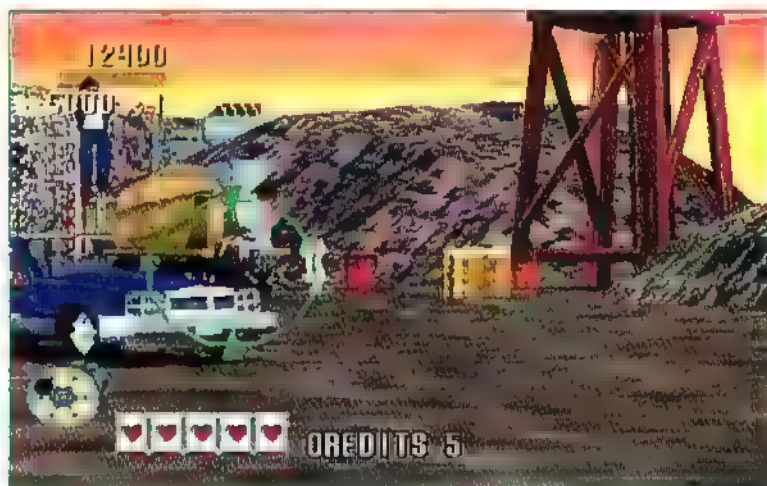
But what I think makes VCPD most exceptional is the methodical, very police-like way in which you progress through the levels. You don't miss the ability to move around yourself so much when the game moves much as you would—protecting your flanks, stopping to scan the horizon for a hint of movement, waiting for the opposition's next move.

Of course, the game is likely to suffer from the limitations inherent to shooting galleries. It is the same creature every time you play it. But that is a complex creature, and in some respects, the IBM version is likely to represent an improvement over the Saturn. The final version is expected to support two-player modem play, which means that you'll always have an opponent when the solo game finally wears thin. (Two-player play on a single machine is also available.)

The mechanics have been subtly improved. The Saturn game forced players to re-load by aiming off-screen and firing. In a sense, this was realistic. But it also removed the player from the game's ferocious flow—your aim was constantly bouncing back and forth—and in a David versus Goliath standoff of this sort, that would get you dead in a hurry.

In the computer version, you'll reload by just double right-clicking with the mouse. While this ability does make the game a little easier, you can disable the auto-target mechanism, ramp up the difficulty (there are nine levels) and play VCPD in mirror image.

You'll be pleasantly surprised by the challenge...and maybe a little more respectful. ☞



BULL'S EYE The game will have an unrivaled level of detail, as enemies react realistically and special care to the spots where you shoot them.

missiles at you. Survive all three bosses and...well, I've no idea. Playing on "hard," I haven't survived longer than one full level at a sitting. Typically, I get massacred by music-industry executive types in Level 3's computer-chittered secretarial pool. How's that for verisimilitude?

KILLING TIME AT THE OFFICE

It looks as though everyone's come to work, and gunmen are behind every article of cover. The game likes to throw them at you in sequence—enemies appearing one after the other in nearby positions—but you'll also find them erupting in the foreground, appearing in clusters, launching grenades and knives from distant cover and running across your field of fire. The bodies always wink out afterward—the better to keep up the 30 frames-per-second scrolling, I suppose—but the game keeps meticulous stats on your successes.

You'll start with just a six-shot revolver. Shotguns, automatics, mag-

nifolds of cars and set off a volcanic detonation of the gas tank sure to take out anyone dumb enough to be standing nearby. You can blow up certain barrels, which release nice explosions, which, in turn, can knock out nearby scenery. And even scenery you can't destroy often registers your fire in some unique way—rocking backward or giving off a metallic rattle.

And then there are the civies. These pitiful, wearisome creatures rise into your line of fire with hands raised, or scuttle, bent over, across the background, murmuring "Don't kill me!" I hold your fire entirely, and you risk taking heat from the less-sympathetic gunmen who are invariably positioned behind the hostages. Kill them—and I've been tempted to kill them out of simple frustration—and you'll lose a life to match the innocent one you've taken.

And yet, these are no more than marks of a good shooting gallery. They don't suggest anything extra. What make

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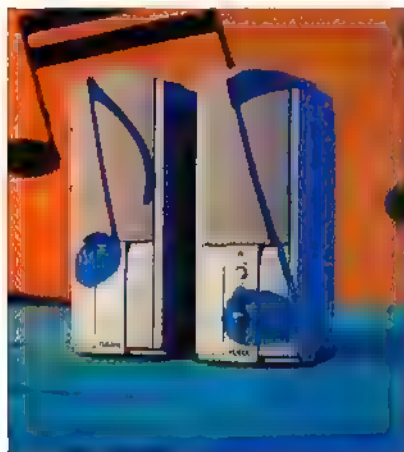


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Circle Reader Service #182



Lots Of Mayhem

Eidos' CRUSADER Clone Falls Short Of Expectations

by Jack Rodrigues

Eidos, formerly Domark, is hyping *TOTAL MAYHEM* as a multi-player equivalent to Origin's *CRUSADER: NO REMORSE*, but it doesn't even come close. It is a real time, squad-level, tactical combat action game, set in a richly detailed isometric perspective world, but it is riddled with technical and design problems and falls far short of expectations.

The premise, like in other action games, is relatively simple. In *TOTAL MAYHEM*'s world amidst a raging war between corporate syndicates, technologically advanced robots have overthrown and enslaved their masters. As a rebel human fighter, you've decided to fight back by taking command of a team of cyborg soldiers, called Mayhem, in order to defeat the ruling robots.

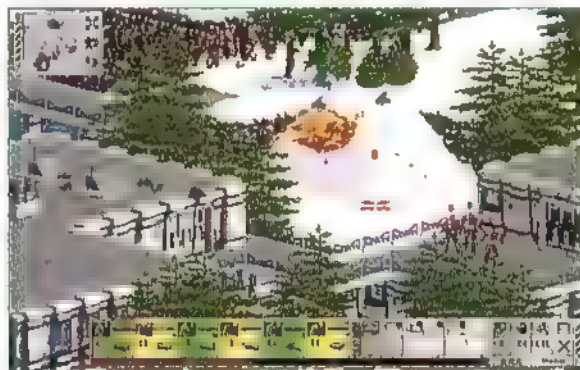
TOTAL MAYHEM's gameplay lies somewhere between a real-

sions and objectives are issued to you by the computer, and all the research and development is done by higher command. Even the soldiers are assigned to you. However, you have full control of the order in which you complete your objectives and in how you accomplish them. Along with the combat, missions are speed up with the addition of keys, switches and hidden buttons to unlock secret doors that sometimes are essential

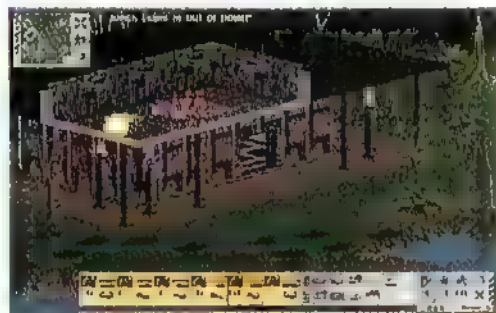
You start the game with two soldiers, but as they gain experience, you get additional troops. After a few missions, you'll end up controlling up to six soldiers for each mission, with replacements available at the base. The soldiers are promoted based on experience points, and their rank determines the individual soldier's skills.

HOWLIN' COMMANDOS

The game's twenty missions range from easy to overwhelming. The missions start off easy, but near the middle missions, things start to heat up. Keys become more scattered and hidden switches soon become essential to finding vital secret rooms. The latter missions see you combatting mobile weapons platforms and robots who are better armed, protected, and more numerous. At this point of the game, the task of finding keys or



CROWD CONTROL There is strength and superior fire power in numbers, but be warned that a crowd gets unwieldy when the action gets fast and furious.



THESE AREN'T COPPER TOPS As the troops join forces to obliterate the last objective, James Lewis #6 runs out of juice.

time combat and strategy game. The preparation for combat is similar to *X-COM* or *JACKED ALLIANCE*. But unlike these strategy games, the only aspect you control on the field is the action. The mis-

sions to the completion of a mission.

After the game's video introduction, you find yourself at the Mayhem base. There, you can arm your soldiers at the armory or modify their armor at the repair facility. The briefing room is where you receive your missions and then teleport to the mission screen. The soldiers are

not nimble, fully articulated individuals who can run and jump as in *CRUSADER*. Instead, they act like dumb cyborgs who botch their orders, spitting up and getting stuck behind trees and machinery.

switches should take a back seat to clearing the perimeter of robots.

TOTAL MAYHEM lets you vary the aggressiveness of your troops. Controlling this aggressiveness, which ranges from cowardly to berserk, figures prominently in the success of your mission. Selecting the right attack mode is crucial when controlling troops with heavy grenade and rocket launchers. Giving these guys an itchy trigger finger will end your mission prematurely. The highly aggressive mode, Berserk Attack, sets the soldier running with guns blazing at the enemy regardless of life or limb and should be used judiciously. Sometimes it's best to reset to wimp mode or "Defensive Attack," in order regain control after a heated offensive.



Look for the *TOTAL MAYHEM* demo on this month's CG-ROM.



Price \$49.95
System

Requirements: IBM compatible 486/66 or better (Pentium recommended) Win 3.1 or Windows 95 8 MB RAM 2x CD-ROM drive SVGA graphics Sound Blaster or compatible sound card
of Players: 1-8
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Developer: Cinematix Studios

Publisher: Domark
San Mateo, CA
(415) 513-8929
Reader Service #: 323

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Status Report

TOTAL MAYHEM's technical difficulties are abundant. The first is the high system overhead. Windows 95 users with a Pentium 166 system, and fast CD-ROM drive, have all options available to them. Cinematic scenes and multiplayer mode are exclusive to Windows 95, which leave Windows 3.1 users, and gamers with modest systems, dry.

Getting the game to run after installation was a major obstacle. I had to fiddle with my video card and download a patch to run the game. Once I got the game running on my Pentium 166, I was rewarded with a high-resolution graphic screen with rich detail and cool CD audio background music. However, this minor triumph was offset by further problems.

Some missions could not be finished on the first try because of blatant bugs. In Mission 10, the green fail-safe key turned all the force fields back on, so I could not complete the mission. It was suppose to turn them off. On the subsequent replay of the mission, everything worked properly. After the transition video for Mission 20 the last mission, the game would cause the computer to hang up while loading, causing a Windows

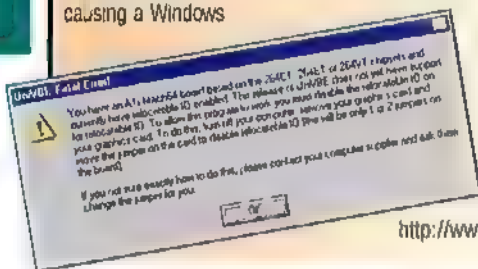
'There are only five types of weapons you can request during the game, but these are augmented by different types of ammunition. Your inventory is further supplemented by explosives and robot control devices. Be aware that if the soldier is lost in battle, you'll only be able to recover door and fail-safe keys, not his armament.

During missions, you can exchange any equipment, except for personal armor, shield, and power generator. However, the individuals involved in the transaction must be near each other. Be sure to load up on first aid kits and batteries. Yes, batteries. The use of these two items must be controlled

manually, while ammo and weapons are automatically swapped as needed. I found the requirement for replacing each soldier's battery tiresome, and more than once I felt like I was playing with toy soldiers. This was a major disruption in the suspension of disbelief, and was reminiscent of spoon feeding your party in ULTIMA: THE FINAL CUT.

INSUBORDINATE SOLDIERS

There is strength and fire-power in numbers, but a crowd can be unwieldy. Combining the weapons of a large team and concentrating their fire on one target in a fire fight has a quick and decisive outcome. Directing that same team through a zig-zagging corridor is a disaster. The soldier's AI lacks the ability to negotiate any obstacle without getting hung up. In passageways, where objects are scattered everywhere, your team disintegrates into a directionally challenged rabble. Traversing staircases can be just as chal-



Protection Violation—a fatal error. I could not enter this mission, even after playing the 19th Mission three times.

Look for the latest patch at

<http://www.domark.com/>.

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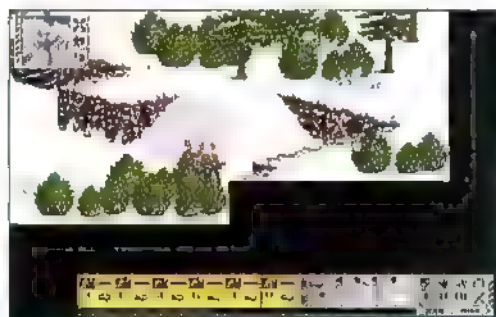
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The National Arbor Day Foundation



WHERE'S THE SWITCH? Some doors open with remote switches, which are hidden in obscure places, instead of keys. In the last few missions, you can only find hidden switches by scanning the walls with the mouse cursor.

sometimes ignoring cease fire orders.

The AI of your own troops isn't the only AI problem. The intelligence of the enemy BOTs is a disappointment as well. The robots who have evoked, improved, united and enslaved humanity, respond and fight like preprogrammed zone perimeter guards. The BOTs are stationary in a set area until they pick

you up on their sensors. They attack until one of you is destroyed or you vacate the area. There are no roving patrols, and they do not pursue you outside of their zone. Lastly, Eidos is positioning TOTAL MAYHEM as a multiplayer CAUSADER, but

CCW couldn't get the game installed in enough computers to play a multiplayer

match. Even with the patch we still couldn't get the game loaded. Multiplayer gaming is fun, but if you can't get the game to run properly, then you can't play multiplayer games.

TOTAL MAYHEM's hi-tech cyborg action adds a new background for real time combat gamers, but it will only satisfy the few who can get the game to run on their computer system.

APPEAL: Gamers wanting combat action with a third-person perspective.

PROS: Detailed high-resolution graphics and cool industrial techno rave background music; assortment of armament and ammo that lead to some good pyrotechnic effects.

CONS: Installation problems, bugs and poor AI in a simplified action game.



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Talk First, Shoot Later

STRIFE Infuses A Doom Clone With Story And Characters

by Mark Clarkson

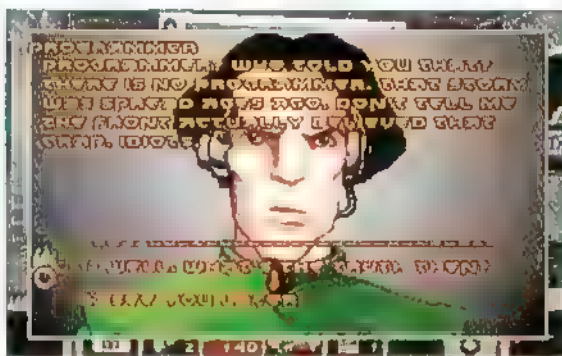
I thought I'd seen it all: DOOM clones in outer space, DOOM clones in a cab, DOOM clones in underground tunnels. Movie-inspired DOOM clones. Funny DOOM clones. But *STRIFE* is something really different. It's a DOOM clone with a plot and storyline. I know, I know, they've all got a storyline. The Mars base has been invaded—kill everything. LA has been invaded—kill everything. But *STRIFE* has a *real story* that unfolds as you play the game.

ONCE UPON A TIME

It all began when a comet crashed into the planet and released a plague that decimated the population. From the ruins of civilization, a new power arose. They called themselves the Order, and now rule the citizenry with an iron fist. But there are rumblings of discontent. A rebel underground is growing, massing its strength, biding its time until they have enough warriors with the guile, strength and skill to lead them into a brave new day.

At first, I approached *STRIFE* as another DOOM clone. I killed the first guy I saw, opened a door and killed another guy. When I scored an electric crossbow, I started taking guys out at long range. Soon after, they started shooting at me on sight. Still, all this carnage seemed somewhat pointless. Killing everybody didn't seem to get me anywhere. In fact, it turns out that killing everyone you meet actually makes it impossible to complete the game.

For example, I discovered a surly, one-eyed stranger lurking in the burnt-out ruins of the old town hall. He was rude to me, so I gave him a few crossbow bolts in



CAN WE TALK? In *STRIFE*, it's best to question first and then blow people away; you don't want to mow down an informant before he gives up all his clues.

the back. When I returned to the street, a guard took a shot at me, so I killed him, too. Then I had to kill his friends, and then their friends. After five minutes or so, the streets were jammed shoulder-to-shoulder with gun-toting acolytes of the Order. But as the body count mounted, so did the forces rallying against me.

It turns out that firing off a gun or an

electric crossbow within the city limits triggers an alarm which rallies the local constabulary into action. If you resist the urge to torch off a few rounds every now and then, you can walk around unmolested. Further, it turns out that the rule guy in the old

town hall was my contact with the resistance. With him dead, I never found my way into their secret base. Once I stopped knifing everyone I met, the game moved along much more quickly.

To give you an alternate, non-lethal way of interacting with characters, *STRIFE* lets you talk to them. Most have nothing crucial to say, just, "Move along, Peasant!"



OUTTA MY WAY No mechanical spider's going to stop you from getting rest and ammo in town, especially when you have the body-burning flamethrower in hand.



Price: \$49.95

System Requirements:

IBM compatible 486-66 (Pentium recommended), DOS 5.0 or higher, 8 MB RAM, 70 MB hard drive space, CD-ROM Drive, VGA Graphics; supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards; supports IPX network drivers.

of Players: up to 8

over a network

Protection: none

Designer: Jim Molnais

Publisher: Velocity

San Francisco, CA

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Reader Service #: 224

Run fast. Run smart. Stop and you're dead.

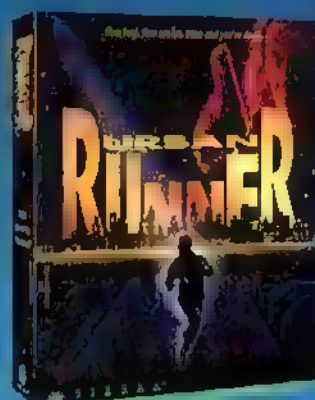
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A sheriff's deputy is murdered. You didn't see anything, but the bad guys **shoot** first and ask questions later. The cops want you for the murder, and at this point they seem like a better option than...

Your legs feel like lead. Your heart feels like it's going to **pound** right out of your chest. Your lungs are **screaming** for air. If you could just get to the...

Truth. **Innocence**. They don't mean a thing if you're **dead**!



RP
RATING PENDING



SIERRA

or, "Please don't hurt me!" But many have important clues to offer and several are key to the game. To speak with someone, hit the space bar, just as if you were opening a door. The pseudo-3D perspective is temporarily suspended, replaced by a single cell showing the character's face. No FMV or 3D-rendered character animation here; just the basics. At the bottom of the screen are your possible responses, "Sell me an assault rifle," for example or "Thanks, good-bye." This is not to say that you don't have to kill anyone in *STRIFE*, or even that you should spare everyone who has something to say. You can still kill plenty of evil acolytes, but do it *stealthily*; a knife in the back makes much less noise than a grenade

CLONING THAT DOOM ENGINE

STRIFE follows the *DOOM* format for action. You can walk, run, spin, look up and down. You can jump but not crouch. As you move through the game, you pick up health, ammo, better weapons, money and the occasional artifact. The layout of the game is reminiscent of *HEXEN*, with its many sub-levels branching out from a central hub. In this case, the hub is a town, where you'll return repeatedly. Between missions, you can visit the town armorer, the weapon smith, or the hospital, to stock up on body armor and bullets, and to get those gaping wounds sewn shut. Radiating out from the town are the levels where the bulk of the game takes place: the prison where you'll lead a jail break, the power plant which you must sabotage, the castle you'll eventually assault, and the nasty sewers.

STRIFE's unusual save-game feature takes a little getting used to. When you start a new game, you select a name for your character. While you can have up to eight characters, each character can have only one saved game, each new save



▲ **A PAIN IN THE ACOLYTE** When you mess with one, you mess with them all, so have your flamethrower ready

overwrites your last one. The problem is, not everyone you meet can be trusted, and not every mission you're offered is a good idea. If you save after making a seriously wrong decision, you may have to restart the game. Luckily, such un-recoverable dead-ends are relatively rare. *STRIFE* is forgiving of most mistakes, including most that get you killed.

CODENAME: BLACKBIRD

The early missions are simple, but later missions become more convoluted: Smith wants the widget from Jones, but Jones will only trade the widget for the muguffin, but Brown has hidden the muguffin somewhere in the sewers. To keep you pointed in the right direction, *STRIFE* gives you a little help. Complete the first mission, a simple assassination, and you're given a communicator linking you to the resistance through a voice in your ear who calls herself "Blackbird." Unlike the irksome PIDA in *ANGEL DREAM*, Blackbird is non-intrusive and usually has something to offer, pointing out clues you've walked by, directing you to people you need to meet and so forth. That's not to say she'll solve the puzzles for you. I got hopelessly lost in the winding sewers beneath the city many times, and all Blackbird had to offer was "I'm lost too. Sorry."

In the end, *STRIFE* suffers from a con-

ple of handicaps, the first of which is a feeling that you've already seen too many *DOOM*-clones to care anymore. And in a genre that's always on the cutting edge of technology and cool graphics, *STRIFE* isn't. It uses the three-year-old *DOOM* engine, and after *DARK FORCES*, *QUAKE* and *DUKE NUKEM 3D*, it looks dull. My other problem with the game is that there is considerably less tension in it since everyone and everything is

no longer trying to kill you. Still, *STRIFE* is a solid, fun and playable game with a nice twist. Instead of trying to put in more bullets, more blood and more explosions than the other guys, *Velocity* went the other way, offering a plot, characters and a story. Granted, it ain't much of a plot, but it doesn't have to be a Beckett play to stand head and shoulders above the rest of the *Doom*ish crowd.

Prevailing at *STRIFE* requires not just twitchy reflexes and a hard heart, but also an unprecedented level of *restraint*. Not only do you not kill everything and everyone, you actually leave the overwhelming majority of people standing. Now what kind of a *Doom* clone is that? Well, it's a pretty good one, actually. ☞

► **APPEAL:** Anyone looking for a first person shooter with less emphasis on mindless violence and more on thinking, or RPG players looking for a first-person environment.

► **PROS:** Story, plot and characters offer a unique twist on the *Doom* engine.

► **CONS:** Unexceptional graphics and level lay-out, a quirky save game feature. *STRIFE* is too watered down for *Duke* 3D-hardened veterans.



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SPECTER'S Ghost

A Multiplayer Shooter That Looks Great, Is Less Thrilling

by Martin E. Cirulis

In the old days of netgaming, there was a little multiplayer arcade action wonder called SPECTER. It wasn't much by today's standards, mainly a high-speed BATTLEZONE with tanks that could be modified, but it was the first networkable title of its kind, and with eight people zooming around its stylish cyberspace levels, blasting away at

each other, it was a sure crowd pleaser. These days, with all the improvements in technology, I've been looking for a title that supplies those same quick and dirty arcade thrills, but with updated, bleeding-edge graphics and sound. And when I first spotted ASSAULT RIGS from Psygnosis, I thought I had my super-sequel. Unfortunately, from the very opening setup for the game I realized that, once again, I had wandered into the Euro-Zone, where software standards are nothing like those we Colonials are familiar or happy with.

NOT EXACTLY REVOLUTIONARY

ASSAULT RIGS (AR) makes no bones about its arcade origins. In fact, the opening animation is pretty much a statement of AR's place in the evolution of the video game. The entire premise here is to take one of three different vehicles and go from level to level, blasting enemies and collecting gems. Not exactly ULTIMA, but hey, it doesn't pretend to be anything more than a twitch game anyway.

Unfortunately, it isn't even particularly good at that. The major problem here is that while things look great and sound pretty darn good, the designers didn't really seem to grasp that vehicle games need room. What's the point of being able to career around and blast away if most the terrain is more closed and claustrophobic than your average DOOM level? While the ramps, turns, bumps and elevators you come across are interesting up to a point,

you are supposed to be driving a vehicle and very little of that comes through until you make a bad turn and flip over. AR succeeds in being prettier and more complex than SPECTER, but fails to capture that same sense of wide open, fast action.

Despite these shortcomings, this game

splashy menu effects that become numbingly tedious and, of course, the utter lack of save game slots.

So if you want net arcade thrills, dig SPECTER out again and save yourself some money and aggravation. Otherwise, for the lone vehicular maniac out there,



TRON REVISITED You'd have more fun watching the old movie than playing this beautiful but sorry multiplayer tank game.

could have redeemed itself as a network game if it allowed you to host a couple of guests, as in WARCRAFT 2 or CONQUEST OF THE NEW WORLD. But no, Psygnosis demands each player have their own copy of the CD in order to play a net game. All I can do is wish any fans of this game lots of luck conning five or six of their friends into shelling out \$60 for this dog.

For me, the final nail in the coffin was the fact that once again, the North American consumer is expected to purchase a product that doesn't quite meet North American standards in software. All the clichés of the import biz are here: the annoying techno-pop soundtrack, the

ASSAULT RIGS may make a good cartridge game for the PC, but there's nothing here that ZONE RAIDERS didn't do better.

APPEAL: Those who dig navigating futuristic tanks around close quarters decked out in splashy graphics and sound.

PROS: A good-looking game that's quick to jump into and sounds great.

FOODS: Restrictively small levels, uninspired gameplay and blatant cartridge game-isms.



Price: \$59.00

System

Requirements: IBM compatible 486 66 or better DOS 6.0 or higher, 8 MB RAM (16 MB recommended) VGA graphics, 2x CD ROM, supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards

of Players: 1-8

Protection: None

Designer: Psygnosis Ltd.

Publisher: Psygnosis Ltd.

Foster City, CA

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Reader Service #: 325

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Figure 1: Multiple Outlets Create PC Vulnerable to Voltage Differential



Figure 2: Computer Protected With Common Ground



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| PC | | | | |
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A One Track Game

It's Time To Don Another Straightjacket In Xatrix's CYBERIA 2

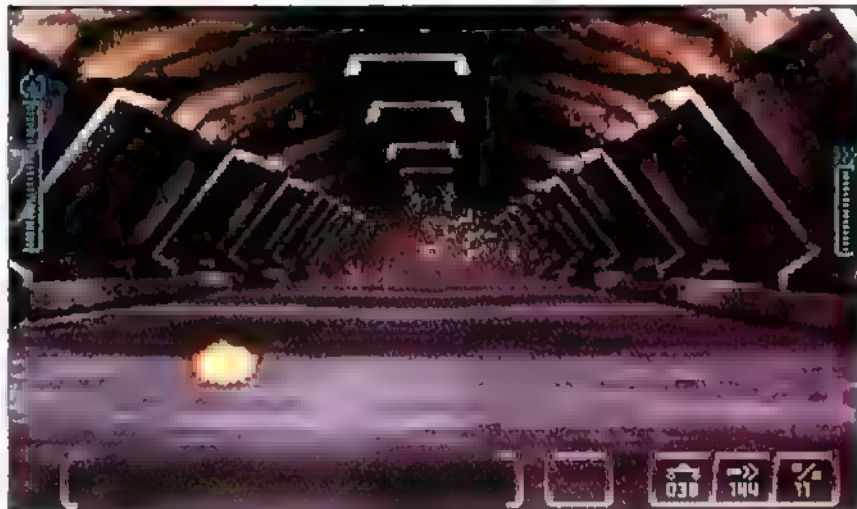
by Elliott Chin

Let's get one thing straight: Rail shooters are not inherently bad, they just get a bad rap. After all, there are rail shooters in the arcades, such as the stunning *Virtual Cop 2*, which are incredible games. On the PC, though, if you take a look at the typical rail-shooting fare, you quickly discover why this genre has been getting a bad name. Case in point: *CYBERIA 2*.

CYBERIA 2 is the follow-up to the original, and takes place three years later, after an evil scientist Dr Corbin has captured you and used the cyberium in your body to craft a deadly poison. You've broken free of your bondage, though, and now you must put a stop to his nefarious scheme.

On the plus side, *CYBERIA 2* isn't nearly as slow as its predecessor. The action scenes come more frequently and there aren't nearly as many annoying puzzles. The gameplay, though, is still just as tedious. You sit through several minutes of cut scenes, play through a train of rail-shooting sequences, see a few more cut scenes, solve a few puzzles for good measure and then shoot your way through another batch of rails.

While there is a lot to blow up, the limited action in *CYBERIA 2* results in a very disappointing experience. All you do is move your mouse over an enemy and click, as the computer moves you down a rail. You can't move yourself or interact with your environment; you're simply propelled down a corridor, tunnel or road at the same monotonous speed. There is also no freedom of movement



SHOOT TO KILL If you like monotonous shooting, sprinkled with annoying cut scenes and pointless puzzles, then *CYBERIA 2* might be up your alley.

whatsoever. Even *REBEL ASSAULT II*, another rail shooter, lets you move your ship around the screen to dodge attacks and move around a little. But in *CYBERIA 2*, you feel as if somebody has gripped your head in a vise and is pulling you along a straight line.

Xatrix further dilutes the gameplay with adventure elements such as cut scenes and puzzles—and therein lies the other problem with *CYBERIA 2*. The advantages of rail shooters are that they offer fast, unadorned, shooting action. But when you add cut scenes to the shooting, you slow down the action, and the game isn't nearly as much of a rush. This is definitely the case in *CYBERIA 2*, because every few minutes, you are force-fed another cut scene, and some of them literally run for minutes. What's worse is that every time you die, you can't just jump back into the same spot you left off. You have to watch the *CYBERIA 2* logo pop-up, sit through the opening animation before the rail sequence and then start over.

The puzzles also distract from the action. Thankfully, there are less of them this time around, but they are still frustrat-

ing and pointless. The dialogue, which you have no choice but to listen to, is especially atrocious, and the voice acting is even worse.

So what is there to recommend this game? Well, the graphics certainly are rich, but that's about it. Fans of the original *CYBERIA* or *The Hit* might find *CYBERIA 2* to their liking, but those who want more from their action games will find it extremely disappointing. My advice: head to the arcades or target this month's action column for a peek at a *good* rail shooter.

APPEAL: Fans of the original *CYBERIA* who want the same mix of simple rail shooting and adventure.

PROS: It's pretty to look at, and the action segments come faster than in the original *CYBERIA*.

CONS: The gameplay is extremely limited, the cut scenes and puzzles dilute the action and can't be escaped, the dialogue and voice acting are poor.



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System

Requirements: IBM compatible 486/50 or better, 8 MB RAM, 2x CD-ROM, less than 1 MB hard drive space, SVGA graphics; supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards

Protection: None

Designer: Xatrix

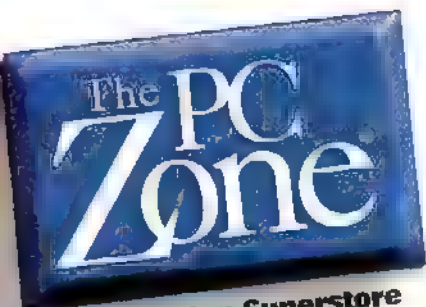
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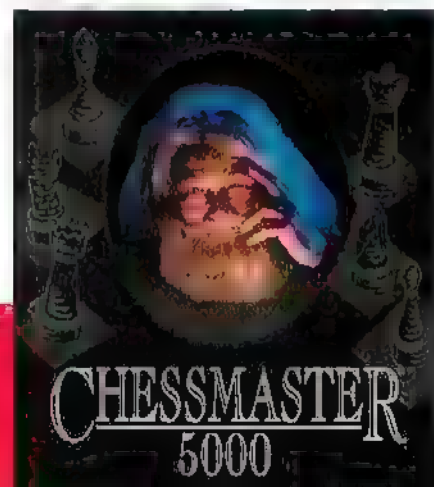
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As the mist swirls, muffling the sounds of hoofbeats off in the distance, the music swells with that mixture of pomp and circumstance reserved

only for royalty (or perhaps English Church music). Finally, figures emerge from the fog. One has a grim determined visage, accentuated by the soot covering him from head to toe; obviously, he is a manservant, laden with burdens both literal and figurative. And his master? Clothed in the finest available on this

budget, he is swathed in velvet and a shiny coat of mail. Atop his head is the crown—yes—this must be Arthur, King of the Britons!

Just about this time you notice: there are no horses; the manservant (or squire if you prefer) has been lugging two coconuts together. Unless you've been living in a very dark cave—with no cable telly at all—mind you, you'll smile, knowing that you are about to plunge headfirst into the rampant, creative silliness that is Monty Python.



“ Monty Python is back, and even better than in **COMPLETE WASTE OF TIME.** ”

CHECK!

► If you enjoy anything Python-oriented, you should check out www.7thlevel.com and www.pythonline.com. Also, A **COMPLETE WASTE OF TIME** has been re-released at bargain prices in most retail chains. And of course, there is the inevitable *Signature Edition* of Holy Grail for collectors. ► What exactly is going on with **CHESSMASTER 5000**? Well, the producer, Glen Hendrickson, has moved on to OT Sports, although Mindscape claims that has nothing to do with the delay in ship-

ping the product. Evidently there's a lot of tweaking going on in the Internet play. More on this game next month.

► We may finally see a reasonable version of **TRIVIAL PURSUIT** for the computer. Hasbro Interactive has worked time into their ambitious schedule to bring the best-selling board trivia game to Windows 95—but with all the games they have in the pipeline (see this month's feature story), don't expect this one until Christmas season at the earliest.

STOP GROVELING!

There are no men with three unlikely anatomical appendages here, just a glorious re-telling of the quest for the Holy Grail, as only these kings of British humor could pull off. Your first thought must be that **ALAN PYTHON AND THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL** must be short, after all, the movie was less than two hours. How long could they possibly stretch the game out to? Rather far, actually.

What the creative team at 7th Level has been able to do is recapture that hilarious drop-jawed Terry Gilliam-esque animation, using digitized film clips and renderings from the film. The great irony is that



NONE SHALL PASS One of the silliest bits of *HOLY GRAIL*—even by Python standards—is the struggle 'gainst the Black Knight, definitely not for the politically correct (or weak of limb)

the SCVA graphics give the game a far better look than the original film. Of course, 7th Level probably had a bigger budget than Python did, since the movie sometimes looks as though it was shot with a Super-8 camera. One reason for the crisp look of the game is that it uses the new MPEG-5 technology—see the difference in the screen shots shown here. *HOLY GRAIL* is the best mix of new and old media since *REBEL ASSAULT*—and a lot more fun.

In any case, what's good for gamers and Python fans alike is that there are probably 25+ hours of silly things to do. 7th Level, in the proud but equally silly tradition of well-meaning marketing teams everywhere, is determined to spread confusion as to what type of game *MONTY PYTHON AND THE QUEST*

is. Neither is it a pure action game, nor does it have enough plot to be called an adventure (although in all fairness, *HOLY GRAIL* is a lot more coherent than the aimless meandering of say, *THE 11th HOUR*). No, *MONTY PYTHON AND THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL* is really *A COMPLETE WASTE OF TIME* with even better subject matter and better technology. In short, it's an instant classic, a model for how to take classic traditional media and transform it into a computer game.

ENTER PYTHON, TALL

Eric Idle is a prime reason why *MONTY PYTHON AND THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL* turned out so well. He knew little about this strange new breed before A

FOR THE *HOLY GRAIL*, actually is. Supposedly, it is "An action-strategy game for hard-core strategists." Now, as much as I would love to scale the walls of Castle Anthrax, my stammering knights braving the taunts of silly, obnoxious French-speak-

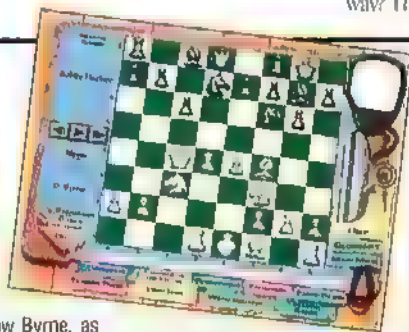
ing *COMPLET WASTE OF TIME*. Since then, Eric has done more than dabble in games; he started in *Psychosis DISCWORLD* game (where his sense of comedic timing made a huge difference). Now, Eric's knowledge of Python lore has made him the obvious choice as the executive producer (along with 7th Level's Bob Ezrin) of *HOLY GRAIL*. His control over the project made it easier for 7th Level to land not only Idle, but other Python members for audio recordings. Terry Coleman added new illustrations as well, so that even the newly-generated material has that authentic Python silliness.

Essentially, gameplay consists of moving to the various locations made famous by the film, then playing a puzzle or arcade game. You can Spank the Virgin at Castle Anthrax, Burn the Witch, Bring Out Your Dead, all while traipsing through a medieval England that your history professors never imagined. Make a daring escape from the three-headed knight, always hungry (and always arguing with itself). Attempt to Catch the Cow outside of Lombard castle. Bravely fight the Black Knight in his dark, brooding and dangerous (if silly) forest. Face unspeakable furry horrors in the felt and unpronounceable Caves of Caerbannog. Oh, yes, lest we forget—there is a "point" of sorts: to find hidden clues and items strewn about the Pythonesque landscape, so that you may safely cross the Bridge of Death. But with a game as much fun as this, why would you even want a thing like plot to get in the way? That would be *truly* silly. ☞

GTIPS!

► Of the classic games showcased in

MAURICE ASHLEY TEACHES CHESS, one contest in particular teaches several lessons. Bobby Fischer is still, in my opinion, the greatest chessplayer of all time, and in his "Game of the Century" against US Grandmaster Donald Byrne he was definitely "in the zone." Notice how Byrne, as white here, seems to have the advantage: his knights are well-posted, and he controls more of the board than his opponent. But Fischer takes advantage of Byrne's king, at risk in the center, while simultaneously attacking white's queen. Fischer sees every opportunity, first putting pressure on one flank, then the



other, then making a surprising—and effective—queen sacrifice. Despite Byrne's tough defense, the combinations spring from Fischer's position. Once you can understand this game, you can't help but be a better chessplayer.


For more on Bobby Fischer and his life, as well as his incredible chess skills, I heartily recommend *Bobby Fischer: Profile of a Prodigy*, by Frank Brady (whose new book on Orson Welles is also worth reading, even though Welles was master of a different medium than chess).

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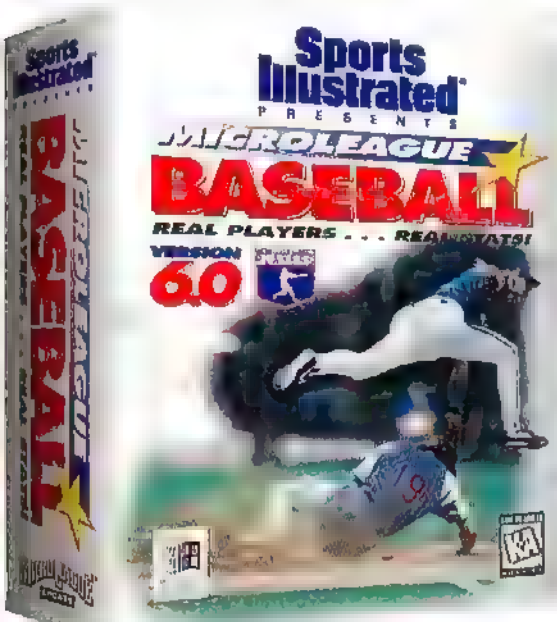
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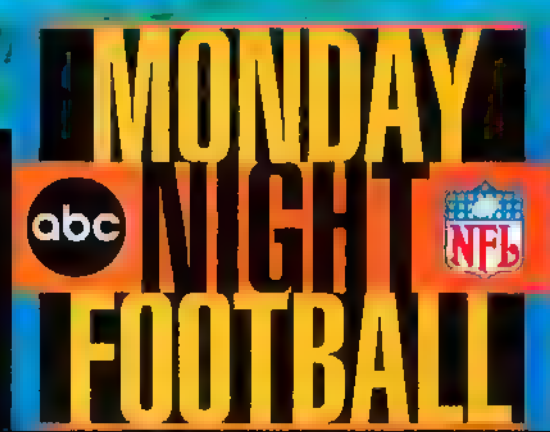
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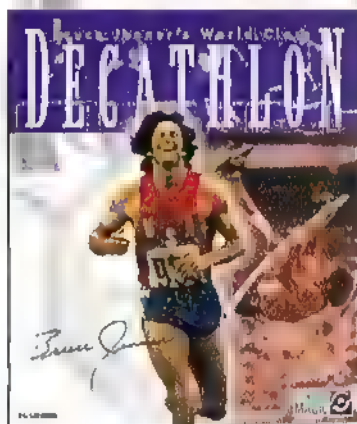
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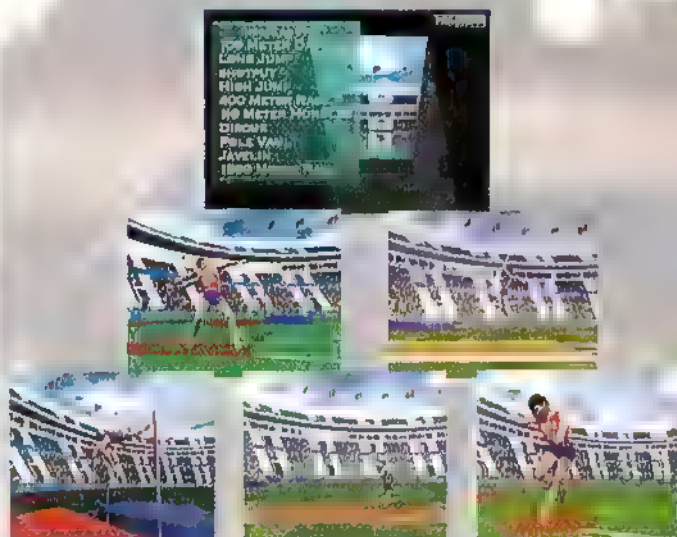


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Gramps Makes A Comeback

Old-Timer MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL Gets Re-Equipped For The Majors



The Friday before Memorial Day dawned sunny and warm—a great day for a ball game. The aged red brick monument I'd come to visit

loomed before me as I climbed out of my battered Subaru. With excitement hanging in the air like a Ralph Branca curveball, I imagined the thrills that this weathered structure had provided baseball fans over the years. Passing through the entrance I sensed that I was visiting a true shrine to the national pastime.

What made my pilgrimage even more intriguing was that I had come to bear witness to perhaps the year's most anticipated birth.

No, I wasn't at Wrigley Field or Fenway Park. Rather, I was at the old APBA Game Company building. Nestled in rolling farm country not far from Gettysburg, APBA HQ, with its 1950's architecture, quirky interior lay-out and endless stacks of player cards is a retro trip down memory lane. And the celebrated birth I'd come in search of? It had nothing to do with Madonna's pregnancy, but rather the reincarnation of MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL, the original heavy hitter among computer baseball games.

BALL BEARINGS

MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL debuted back in the days when Apple IIs and Commodore 64s battled IBM PC XT's for computer entertainment dollars, but it has been on the MIA list for several seasons. That's why this summer's release, officially called SPORTS ILLUSTRATED PRESENTS MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL 6.0, has sports gamers' anticipation level going into extra innings.

A lot has transpired in the years since the game dropped off the radar in 1992. Newer releases like Sierra's FRONT PAGE SPORTS BASEBALL, Accolade's HARDBALL 5 and Stormfront's TONY LA ROSA 3 have established themselves as perennial perennial contenders in the graphics-oriented baseball sim arena. Even stat-oriented products like Miller Associates' BASEBALL FOR WINDOWS have stepped it up a notch, adding hunted multimedia elements such as play-by-play announcers and stadium backdrops. With the competition getting better every year, will MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL enjoy a triumphant return, or will it end up as just another face in an ever-growing crowd?

While the late alpha version I saw was far from complete, the game clearly has some intriguing features. If the finished product can deliver the goods, it's sure to

**“ MICRO-
LEAGUE
BASEBALL 6
should
appeal to
both stat-
and graphics-
oriented
sports
fans. ”**

ON DECK

► Philips Media and BlueSky Software are kicking off their TOTAL CONTROL sports line later this year with NFL TOTAL CONTROL FOOTBALL, which will purportedly focus heavily on front office management strategy as well as on arcade action.

► For something completely different, zip up your windbreaker and keep your eyes peeled for Vivid Simulations Inc.'s SAIL 2000, a 3D simulation of the America's Cup yacht match. Targeted for Christmas, the new version is a sequel to last year's SAIL 95, adding head-to-head modem play and the ability to race ice boats as well as IACC yachts. No word yet on whether you can sink your

opponents with torpedos (hey, we can dream).

► At press time, we put on our fake caddy outfits and snuck onto the fairway for a closer look at VR GOLF, the next game to be released by Interplay's VR Sports division. The game will ship with two fictional courses (one in the U.S. and one in Scotland), eight modes of play, three commentators, variable weather conditions, and the ability to change your player's gender, skin tone, and—thank goodness—clothing (no green pants for us, thank you). The company has reportedly lined up licenses for four real courses (with more possibly to come) to be offered on an expansion disk.

cause a stir among baseball fans. In fact, it should have enough crossover appeal to bridge the traditional gap between stat- and graphics-oriented players. Why? Because the game, while heavy in statis-

game not only allows for solitary and modern action, but also commissioner run league play via the Internet. Gamers will be able to join a league through MicroLeague's Web site. Once the league

is formed, drafting takes place. The commissioner will then publish a schedule, and teams can begin duking it out in real time. Gamers will also be able to monitor stats and standings, and make roster moves online.

With real-time Internet action as the major component of MicroLeague's game plan, the company also intends to release pro football, basketball, and ice hockey sims in the coming year. Each will offer online league play.

"We're looking to

establish ourselves on the Web as the place to go for sports replay," product director Scott Clanci says. "We want to be the authority on statistics. We're not out there to compete with the FAs of the world in the joystick arena."

In fact, they are so committed to statistical accuracy that the game no longer has subjective ratings factors. Each player aspect is based on a mind-boggling 1,200 statistical categories licensed from Stats, Inc. The heavy numbers orientation forces the game to buck at least one hot trend in sports simulation: career mode. Because play is totally rooted in past performance, the game offers exhibition and single-season play only. The designers saw no way to adjust performance for player aging or to introduce fictitious rookie replacements without a major deviation from the game's statistical emphasis.

The initial release of MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL 6.0 includes teams from the 1995 and 1996 seasons. The company has plans for at least six past season disks which should be available by September. All 28 major league stadiums are included with the game, with old-time stadiums also in the pipeline for later in the year.

BUILDING A DYNASTY

MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL 6 is the flagship product of MicroLeague Multimedia Inc. (MMI), formerly known as Sports Associates, Inc. The parent company's name change was timed to coincide with a recent public stock offering. Along the way, MMI purchased APBA.

"We really thought the synergy was there," Clanci explained. "What better way to build a winning team than to get the granddaddy of sports boardgame simulations mixed in with the creator of the original sports computer baseball simulation. It was the right fit."

And what of the company that pioneered baseball simulation gaming some 40 years ago?

"APBA continues on," Clanci assured me. "The APBA products should benefit from increased access to retail channels via MMI's distribution connections."

MMI's acquisition of APBA is sure to have ripple effects in the sports gaming community. While the APBA board games will continue, future releases in the APBA computer line, especially MS-DOS versions, are in doubt. In fact, at least one discounted CD-ROM compilation, featuring the APBA baseball, football, and ice hockey games has found its way to market, indicating that these products are being phased out. On the up side, MMI is developing a statistical boxing game, which will probably be the first product released as a joint MicroLeague-APBA venture.

MMI's commitment to APBA seems firm. The parent company has relocated its offices from Delaware to APBA's quaint Pennsylvania facility. Some key APBA people still hold positions in the new organization, and floor-to-ceiling stacks of APBA player cards fill storage areas, awaiting shipment to board game customers.

Less clear, however, are the potential effects that the ownership change may have on BASEBALL FOR WINDOWS, since publisher Miller Associates licenses certain aspects of its game from APBA. Here's hoping the Millers don't wind up as odd men out in the MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL revival. **S**



I LIKE TO WATCH MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL 6.0 promises to combine its traditional stat-intensive, managerial mode of play with new 3D-rendered graphics.

tics, also has a very appealing graphical flavor.

The game uses motion-captured animation, with each player individually scripted. This means gamers can expect to see things like infielders bouncing on their toes as they get set for the pitch. Like the older versions, the game defaults to a press box view of the diamond. That's where the similarity ends, however. With a click, gamers can zoom down to field level and check things out from a near endless variety of camera angles. The Windows 95 native product also features DOOM-like 3D movement within the playing field, allowing gamers to observe the action from any perspective.

The key word here is *observe*. Unlike most graphics-oriented games, MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL is strictly a managerial sim. There are no arcade elements. You can't pitch, bat or field. If the final version works as planned, the result will be a product that has a flavor all its own—a heavy statistical orientation that rides along on state-of-the-art graphical con tails.

The most exciting thing about the new version is its potential for online play. The

YOU CAN WATCH HIM ON TV.

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No matter how you slice and dice the lineup, when you play *Front Page Sports: Baseball Pro '96* you'll be playing the Big Unit of baseball sims. It's the only game that relies on more than stats to put the ball in play. It also goes deep to take a look at wind, humidity, ball spin, and bat speed on every single swing. Graphics hit a dinger, too, with ultra-realistic motion-captured 3D animation, and camera controls that let you watch from anywhere in all 28 big league ballparks. Then there's the section where you can slip into the body of any active major leaguer and show your stuff at pitching, hitting, and fielding. The coolest thing, though, is that you get to make managerial decisions that are highly questionable. Or, possibly, pure genius.

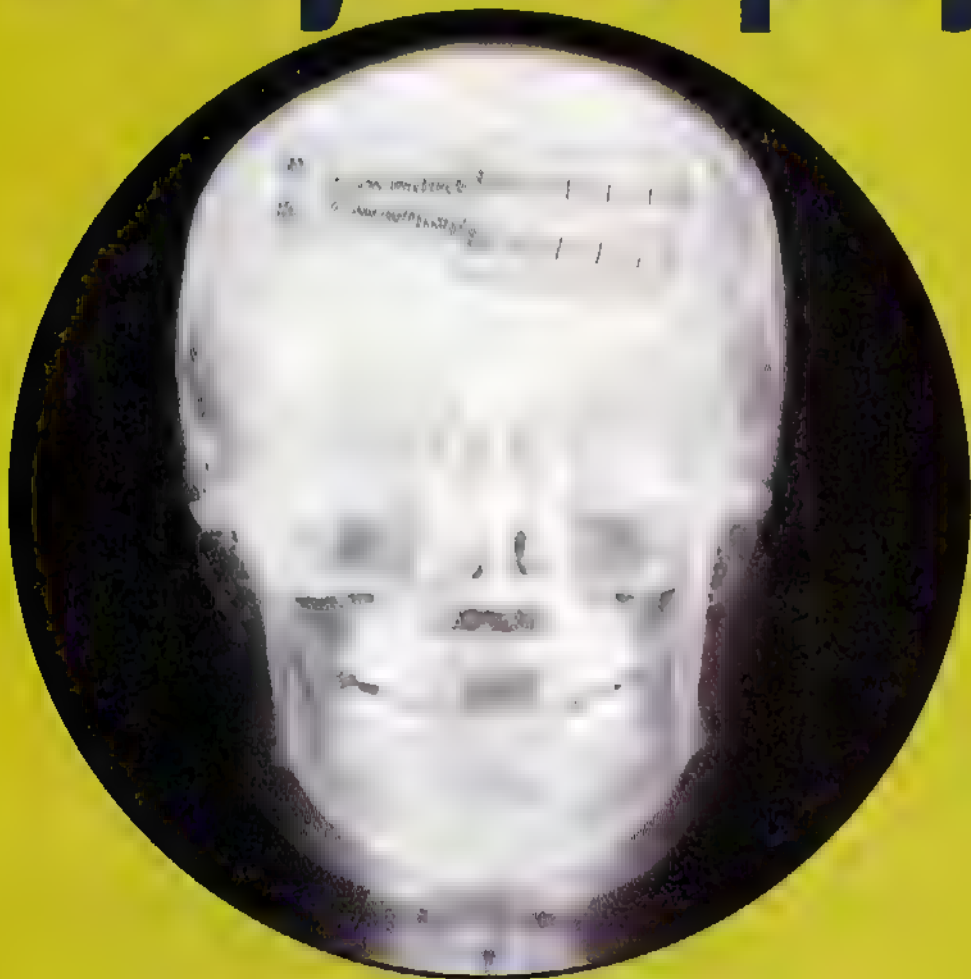


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with credit. As illustrated, Driver photographs by J. Edmunds, Jr. from Station

Circle Reader Service #183



Virtually Playable

VR SOCCER '96 Has Chrome Galore, But Gameplay Misses The Goal

by Gordon Goble

As any buzz-conscious computer sports fan knows, the latest Big Thing is "virtual 3D." Head Cams and Ball Cams lend new perspectives and up-close-and-personal looks of our favorite sporting events. At first glance it's all quite impressive, but in practice just how many of these amazing new angles and 3D renderings actually give the player a better grip on gameplay? Sometimes, you get the feeling that good old-fashioned 2D wasn't so bad.

Such is the case with VR Sports' VR SOCCER '96, a game that tries so hard to look good that it ends up being just plain hard to play, mainly because there isn't one consistent viewing perspective. Every possible floating camera (and there are a grand total of seven!) is either confusing, far too isolated or prone to wild panning. The lesson here is: what works in DOOM doesn't necessarily work everywhere.

PENALTY KICK

VR SOCCER's head and ball cameras provide superb replay potential, but critical cross-field player movement is nearly impossible to monitor from such limited perspectives. Likewise, the game's more distant viewpoints are often too much so, with players becoming mere blips on the horizon. Electronic Art's FIFA 96 is guilty of this too, but at least it includes a couple truly workable gameplay views among its otherwise replay-oriented options.

VR SOCCER trips up elsewhere too, particularly in the game's scaling. Shotmaking from well beyond the halfway mark, camera positions that seem to shrink the field down to the size of an



ALL DRESSED UP You'll swear you're looking at real people in VR Soccer, but watching them play soccer is not much fun

indoor soccer pitch, and super-speedy player motion that further intensifies the bang-bang "hockey rink" feel simply don't blend well. In fact, offensive thrusts happen so frequently that the game designers seem to have constructed a built-in buffer so scores won't hit the stratosphere.

Then there are the little things, balls that pop out of play with annoying consistency, a dark screen that hampers important visual information such as ball shadow, and an announcer who is wont to exclaim "he'll be pleased with his team's performance today" and "he'll not be pleased with his team's performance today" in almost the same breath.

ON THE OTHER FOOT

This is all quite sad, since VR SOCCER towers over its peers in some respects. The game's realistic player structure and fluid animation is second to none—just watching a player fall down and get back up again is a real treat. Even up close, players look like real people rather than an assemblage of pixels.

The game also boasts superb visual aids. The player with the ball will have one of several indicators under his body depending on the circumstance, including a triangle that points in the direction of the intended shot or pass, and a square

when he's in a position to "square" the ball.

VR SOCCER comes with 44 international teams; league, tournament and practice modes, and a host of graphic options including high/low resolution shifting on the fly. Technicalities such as offside, substitutions and bookings (penalties) may be turned on or off, and referees range from

the nearly blind to the positively telescopic. Network and modem play for up to 20 players is supported but an after-match stat summary is not.

When the inevitable comparison tests are made, however, VR SOCCER just doesn't cut the Grey Poupon, and is nowhere near knocking FIFA 96 from its reigning position as king of digital soccer. Despite FIFA's penchant for predetermined goals, tackles and decisions, it more correctly recreates the environment and mood of soccer in a cleaner setting that simply beckons you back for more. VR SOCCER '96 looks great, but this is a classic example of too much glitz and not enough game. **B**



Price: \$49.95

System Requirements:

486DX-33 or better, DOS 5.0, 8 MB RAM (16 MB recommended), 120 MB hard disk space, VGA graphics card (SVGA supported), CD-ROM drive (2x recommended), Microsoft-compatible mouse, supports most major sound cards, joystick optional.

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: Gremlin Interactive Ltd.

Publisher: VR Sports Irvine, CA (714) 955-9592

Reader Service #: 327

APPEAL: "Virtual 3D" and animation freaks who appreciate a great replay.

PROS: Uncannily authentic, state-of-the-art player animation, an infinite variety of camera angles, cool ball control indicators.

CONS: For all the fancy camera angles, there's no practical gameplay perspective. The action is far too fast, and the field is far too small—a bad combination.





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Technical Advisor William "Bud" Gruner commanded the submarine USS Skate during WWII, and was awarded the Navy Cross and the Silver Star. Commander Gruner provides narration of technical and tactical matters as well as personal anecdotes of his vast WWII experience.



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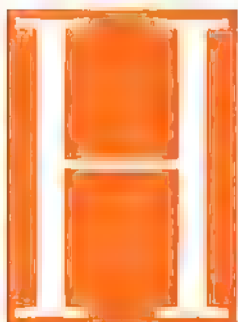
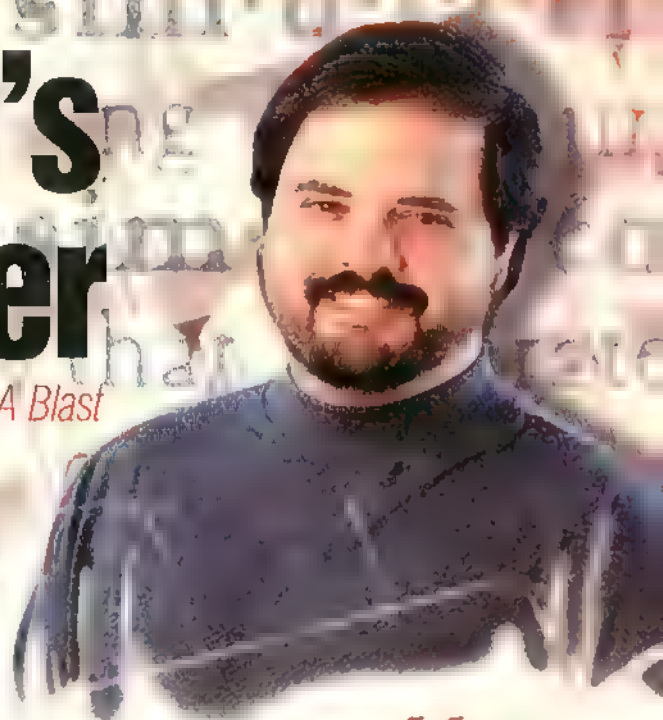
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Circle Reader Service #20

Multiplayer's Final Frontier

PLANETARY RAIDERS Promises To Make Capitalism A Blast



ave you been spending more time flying into the ground in *Warbirds* and *Air Warrior* than attack-

ing enemy planes? Tired of fighting for God and country, and ready to make some cold, hard cash for your efforts? Or are you just frustrated that nobody (except a bunch of computer-generated Kilnathi) knows just what an amazing space pilot you are?

If any of these describe you, then you'll want to watch www.wargames.com for the newest effort from the creators of *Warbirds*, called *PLANETARY RAIDERS*.

STATION KEEPING

At the core, *PLANETARY RAIDERS* is very much a multiplayer homage to Origin's

PRIVATEER series. Players start with a basic space ship and enough money to buy essential equipment for it. From there, it's up to you what strategy you want to take. Do you earn a proud living as a hard-working trader, or go for the big bucks as a smuggler? Or does space piracy sound more exciting? ICI plans to leave the game as open-ended as possible, so those possibilities and more are open to you.

But *PLANETARY RAIDERS* is about more than space combat and personal wealth. The game promises to have a full-blown resource-management element as well. Players will fly from one of 12 space stations in a planetary system. Each of these stations both produces and requires resources, and none is completely self-sufficient. That's where the trade element comes in. When you take a mission to pick up, say, defensive weapons, you're helping to keep your base supplied. If you succeed, not only do you profit, but you build the strength of your home base as well.

Of course, this works both ways. If you

can intercept other players as they attempt to bring supplies back to their stations, you can hit them in the pocketbook and cripple their station. Be careful, though. Once you're marked as a nuisance, the station you're bothering can put a bounty on your head, and players the solar system over will be gunning (or laser-ing) for your ship.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

The best way to survive with a bounty on your head is to fly with friendly forces at your side. Players can form squadrons, and these squadrons can form corporations, which in turn run the stations. Once a corporation is in control of a station, players won't be able to just sit back and watch the credits roll in. Someone will need to manage the station's resources, sending players out on missions both to sustain the station and increase the bankroll. Of bigger concern are station raiders. Players with the cash and resources will be able to build invasion robots, which can be shipped *en masse* to competing stations in an effort to take them over. In the initial version, the victor will likely be determined simply by the size of the attacking and defending forces. Eventually, look for a fully interactive invasion module to go online.

“Take
PRIVATEER, mix
in a little
CAPITALISM,
and sprinkle
with some
Civ...”

ON THE RADAR

▶ You won't have to wait idle while DID wraps up TFX 3, the sequel to EF2000. The coming TACTCOM add-on for EF2000 will breathe new life into the game. Along with all the fixes and enhancements included in the various EF2000 patches, TACTCOM will add serial and modem play, including a number of new multiplayer mission options. The new Tactical Mission Planner will allow you to plot your own combat sorties in the campaign, choosing which target to take out, the strike package to use, and

how to get there. A new smart camera system will let you view other aircraft, going straight to where the action is without forcing you to key past dozens of planes sitting on the tarmac.

▶ Also in the works is SUPER EF2000 FOR WINDOWS 95, essentially EF2000 and TACTCOM in one package with full Win 95 support. SUPER EF2000 will include detailed online help and reference material. Both products should be available sometime this summer.

ETIPS!

► You have a hot new Pentium 200 and you can't wait to see the smooth frame rate on your classic sims and space games like CHUCK YEAGER's *Air Combat* and *Wing Commander II*. Then you discover that in the bad old days program-

mers never anticipated machines as fast as we have now and the games are unplayable at hyperspeed. No need to worry though. Just hit the net and find the MoSLo utility, which allows you to run programs at anywhere from 1 to 99 percent of normal speed. You'll find the utility at [ftp://ftp.ea.com/pub/patel/us/moslo.exe](http://ftp.ea.com/pub/patel/us/moslo.exe).

In the same way that you can enhance and update your fighters and transports, you'll also be able to update the infra-structure of your corporation's station. You can enhance the station's production by improving the planet you're orbiting. If you produce food, terraform the planet. If you produce raw resources, build automated mines.

If you're looking for that extra edge, go visit the Starman. This John the Hustler-style character inhabits a corner of the solar system and is the local black marketeer. The Starman can sell you contraband weapons not available anywhere else, perfect for that space station assault you're planning.

SHIP SHAPE

All this resource management may be fun (and indeed, you can just play clerk and not fly at all if that's what you want to do), but it's the action that will be the primary interest of the majority of players. Initially, *PLANETARY RAIDERS* will sport three types of fighters and three types of transports. But you won't be able to let appearances indicate who's safe to attack. That top-flight fighter may have broken the bank of the owner and thus be equipped with simple lasers, while that little starter ship may be loaded with all the hottest systems.

As your wallet fattens, you'll be able to buy a better radar, more powerful communications systems, and of course bigger weapons. On tap so far are lasers, rail guns, and a variety of missiles. You can even customize your ship's color scheme.

The "fight model" will be a real departure for the accuracy fanatics at ICI—it will offer simple, *Wing Commander*-style control. ICI considered doing real

space physics, but what's the fun in spending half of your flight accelerating, then turning around and then spending the rest of the journey decelerating? Instead, you'll be able to alter speed and direction easily, and jump-gates will take the drudgery out of going from planet to planet (as well as providing good spots for pirates to lie in wait).

Along with station defense, bounty hunting, transport escort, and trade runs,

day, eh? Double-cross him, though, and you'll quickly gain a negative reputation.

So what happens if your hard-earned ship gets blown away and you don't have any credits in the bank? Along with the corporations, there's also a military presence in the solar system. When you reenter the game, you can join the military, where you'll be given a free ship and steady pay. Look for the military to keep any corporations that grow too big for their britches in check.

STATION ASSEMBLY

Of course, a universe this extensively modeled and with this much freedom of action is going to be quite a task to model. Look for a free, open beta test with a subset of these features to start soon after you read this. As time passes more features will be added, and once the main structure is in place, the billing clock will be turned



SPACE BLANKET BABYLON The ships in *PLANETARY RAIDERS* may be a bit polygon-light, but the smooth motion and huge space stations give you a great sense of scale.

you can work to disrupt your opponents' economies as well. Resources from planets and asteroids will be shipped to the stations via unmanned cargo pods, which can be destroyed en-route, for instance.

Look for some other unique possibilities. For example, you could radio a near-dead opponent and tell him that if he drops his cargo, you'll let him go. Better to surrender today and live to fight another

day. The features outlined here are what ICI plans for the basic game, but they have some amazingly elaborate plans for versions to follow. After getting a look at an early alpha version of *PLANETARY RAIDERS* and grasping the scale as relatively small ships flew around huge space stations orbiting even more gigantic planets, this free trader is definitely ready to beam aboard. ☾

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Computer Gaming World
February 1996

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The Macintosh Surfaces For A New U-boat Mission

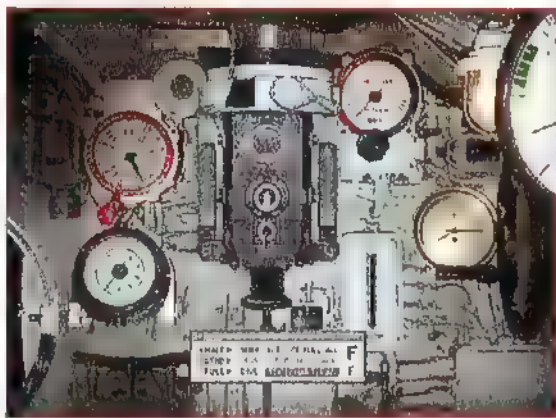
by Kevin Turner

Operation *Drumbeat* was the code name for U-boat operations off the East Coast of the United States during World War II. After America entered the war, Admiral Donitz, the chief architect and commander of the German U-boat fleet, sent his U-boats to America to intercept and destroy convoys and disrupt the sea lanes. He almost succeeded. U-boat commanders found a country ill-prepared for submarine warfare. There were no coastal blackouts, and ships traveled up and down the East Coast without escort or convoy. The British tried to relay the lessons they had learned, but found the U.S. Navy disinterested. Meanwhile, the Germans went hunting in seas much friendlier than those they had left behind.

DRUMBEAT, the game, is a Macintosh submarine simulation (a Windows version is under development) where you take on the role of a U-boat commander during this East Coast campaign.

PHOTO REALISM

The first thing that really impressed me about *DRUMBEAT* was the graphics. The control room is an actual photo of a control room, altered slightly so that all the gauges and controls fit on the screen. Clicking on the hatch takes you to a photo of the captain's stateroom. From the stateroom, you can tour the aft end of the submarine. Each stop on the tour is a photograph, although there is nothing do in the other compartments. From the control room, you can head forward and tour the business end of the U-boat. This tour isn't functional, but it shows you what the confines of a U-boat were like.



WHAT A DIVE You can't fault the realism of *DRUMBEAT*'s interiors, as Deadly Games used photos from real U-boats.

Heading to the bridge, you'll find a set of binoculars for surface attacks, and a voice tube used to receive status reports. Checking the horizon is done in 90-degree jumps, instead of the panning that most PC sub games support. The sea moves, although the effect is hampered by a demarcation line on the horizon where the sea seems to flatten. Day turns to night in a hurry, meaning sun one moment and stars the next.

The sounds were more impressive. When you give an order, it's not merely acknowledged and carried out—the entire process is audible. For instance, a depth change order is acknowledged, the instructions are given to the helmsman and planesman, and the sounds of pumping or blowing tanks can be observed. As I left the sub pens in Lorient, France, a horn sounded and I could hear the engine running and the wind going by.

SUB PAR

Game play wasn't quite up to the standard set by *ACES OF THE DEEP*, but was entertaining nonetheless. The interface for ship's control was hard for an old PC hand to learn. I spent a lot of time looking for familiar ways to accomplish tasks, only to end up with the same control window that follows the player everywhere.

The game is heavy on strategy, and this is reflected in the manual, which is nothing more than a well-written treatise on sub operations and strategy. Animation is minimal, and a lot of the standard sim perks, such as tactical aids and sonar input, simply don't exist. But what *DRUMBEAT* does do, it does very well.

The U-boat has a Target Data Computer that is to die for. Once a target is spotted, it's viewed through

either the binoculars or the periscope. Input the masthead height, divisions in the reticle, and angle-on-the-bow into the TDC, then press the "generate solution" button. Presto, one working solution. While the TDC is being operated, the target seems to freeze, which makes life much easier.

Aircraft attacks are frequent, and the only possible solution is to dive. The sounds around the dive are so well done that I felt myself flashing back to my submarine days. Yes, it did sound a lot like that, sans the German accents.

If you have a Mac and an interest in sub warfare, I recommend this game. If I had one wish, it would be for developers to put *DRUMBEAT* and *ACES OF THE DEEP* in a blender. Then you'd have the ultimate submarine simulation. **E**



Price: \$44.95
System Requirements: Macintosh LC II or faster (PowerMac native supported), 8MB RAM, 16-color or 16-grey display
Protection: None
Designer: Rene Vidmer
Publisher: Deadly Games
 Bridgehampton, NY
 (516) 245-4525
Reader Service #: 328

APPEAL: Mac users ready to plunge into the world of submarines.

PROS: Well-done targeting systems; the photograph-based graphics work surprisingly well; the sound effects will have you checking the walls for leaks.

CONS: Control interface is quirky, and there's little in the way of moving objects here.



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OVER THE REICH Emphasizes Aerial Strategy Over Reflexes



The siren call is seductive, even mesmerizing: "Come to me, O lost and lonely boardgamer. Reject thy hexagonal ways! Foreswear your outdated turn-based beliefs and embrace the new, the fast-moving, the *real-time* strategy game." Certainly, games such as WARCRAFT II and COMMAND & CONQUER are a riot to play—especially multi-player. But all the claims being made about these two games ignore the basic fact that they were successful because they were well-designed, not just because they were real-time. And, as good as they are, both WARCRAFT II and C&C still fail to address one of my pet peeves: that all real-time strategy games eventually descend into arcade action, despite their loftier aspira-

tions. If I want fast action with little real strategy to get in the way, I'll play *QUAKE*, thank you.

Evidently a lot of gamers feel as I do, since STEEL PANTHERS, CIV II and FANTASY GENERAL are getting as much



FLAK ATTACK The sequel to FLIGHT COMMANDER 2 will offer better AI and even more detailed combat, bringing turn-based bulls back for some more banal wargaming.

attention as the real-time conflicts. In fact, it can be argued that the runaway success

of PANZER GENERAL (see *Briefings* below) has put turn-based wargames back on the map, at least for the foreseeable future. All of which is welcome news for Avalon Hill, as it continues to refine methods to bring its classic gaming line to the computer.

Actually, the "new" era at Avalon Hill started some three years ago, with the

release of PC KINGMAKER, which to date has sold 40,000+ copies—decent for a computer wargame. But those kind of numbers have not been duplicated by any other AH product—not even the well-received WORLD AT WAR series.

AIR STRATEGY MARSHAL

In particular, Avalon Hill was disappointed with sales of FLIGHT COMMANDER 2, especially since the game made every critic's "best of" list. So, designer Charlie Moylan decided to spice up the next game in the series. Like its predecessor, OVER THE REICH is a game where the outcome is determined by thinking rather than reflexes. It isn't a flight sim, but an aerial strategy game, much like the old SPI Air War—only with less hassles and far

“ OVER THE REICH could be Avalon Hill's breakthrough computer game. ”



►Find the demo of OVER THE REICH on the CGW website at <http://www.zdnet.com/gaming>

BRIEFINGS

►In case you are confused by the rumors flying around, it's official: Sid Meier has left MicroProse as speculated in last month's column. Check out this month's Read.Me for the full low-down. ►Talonsoft continues to rock with the popular BATTLEGROUNDS series. Not only did BATTLEGROUNDS: GETTYSBURG debut as the number three wargame in the CGW Top 100 readers' poll (confirming my contention that it was the best American Civil War game in nearly a decade), but it also has

reported sales of over 60,000 units. In addition, BG: WATERLOO had, according to Empire (the distributor for Talonsoft in the US), the highest "buy-in" at retail chains of any historical wargame they've released this year. ►After BG: SHILOH, the BATTLEGROUNDS series travels to the Middle East with BG: SINAI. It will be interesting to see how the system—so well-suited to 19th century warfare—is adapted to simulate the high-tech armor heavy combat

continued on page 158 ►►►

▶▶▶continued from page 157

between the Arab and Israeli armies. The good news is that Talonsoft plans scenarios for all the famous engagements, including the Six-Day War.

▶More good news for strategy gamers: GMT Games (after parting ways with SSI) has signed a letter of intent with Interactive Magic to bring its sophisticated *Alexander the Great* board game to the computer; the game will likely be in Windows format, for release sometime next year.

▶After *HISTORY OF THE WORLD* is completed, the next big project at Avalon Hill will be PC *PANZERBLITZ*. The big questions are whether this mega-boardgame hit (it's sold over 275,000 copies, making it second only to *Axis & Allies* in board wargame sales) can be updated from its 1970 rules to a more modern mindset without damaging the feel and quality of play.

▶*PANZER GENERAL* continues to sell very well—CGW was able to confirm sales data of over 250,000 units. When you consider that a new Windows 95 and

Macintosh version has just been released, it seems fair to say that PG will be incontestably the best-selling historical computer wargame of all time, not even including bundling agreements. Our congratulations to SSI and all the talented people involved.

▶Never been to a game convention? Two of the best are but weeks away. GenCon (Milwaukee, \$40, 414-248-0389 fax, tsrinc@aol.com) is the largest board/computer game convention, with an average annual attendance of over 20,000. Every major (and many minor) board and computer game vendors are there to ply their wares, run tournaments, and pontificate on the state of the art of gaming. If you are an RPGer, this is the place to be, as it hosts the official RPGA championships. AvalonCon (Baltimore, \$35, 800-999-3222, Avalon.Hill@genie@geis.com) is a much smaller con, averaging about 1400 attendees. There are no lectures, seminars or other distractions from the more than 100 boardgame tournaments—all featuring AH games.

more realism. It could be Avalon Hill's breakthrough computer game.

The big differences in *OVER THE REICH* and *FC2* involve more than just moving the venue from the modern era to WWII. A big contributor to the project has been J.D. Webster, whose prolific boardgames on air combat have been praised by aficionados ever since his first project, *Air Superiority*, used 12-point movement (remember, this was on a hex-based game map) back in the mid-eighties. Freed from the restrictions of card-board and paper, Charlie and J.D. will

now be able to add even more details than in J.D.'s boardgames.

OVER THE REICH has the potential to be not just the best game ever produced on the Air War over Germany—it is that already—but one of the best WWII games we've seen, period. If you read my column on computer opponents a couple of months ago, you know how highly I rate the AI for *FC2*. *OVER THE REICH* should give you an even tougher fight, because the planes perform with a consistent internal logic. The exemplar research becomes more than just mere number-crunching and wind tunnel

effects algorithms piled on top of one another. Spitfires turn in exquisitely tight circles around Me-109s, while Focke-Wulf 190s make up for their lesser maneuverability with devastating firepower. The early German jets blast through Allied propeller-driven craft and quickly leave, their hit-and-run tactics necessitated by low fuel reserves.

MULTIMEDIA BOMB RUNS

Like *PANZER GENERAL*, *OVER THE REICH* it's real strength comes from strong campaigns, each featuring a heap of authentic WWII archival film footage: strafing runs, screaming jets, fighter sweeps, *et al*. But these little multimedia touches never get in the way of the combat-rich environment. You arm your fighter group, choose your pilots, decide which route to take and charge toward the target. As you fend off attacks from interceptors, with each loss, you must make the tough decisions: Do I attack the secondary target? Have I enough fuel to make it home? And you face similar decisions with your pilots, who gain in expertise and fall prey to fatigue, adding role-playing elements to the mix.

Eleven types of Allied aircraft are modeled in the game, including the P-38 Lightning, the P-51B and P-51D Mustang, and the famous B-17 Flying Fortress. Should you get tired of playing the Americans, you can switch to the British or German sides; in the latter, you'll find out just how experimental the Komet rocket fighter really was. And it looks as though not just e-mail play, but Internet play will be included as well. Now, if you'll excuse me, HQ has just informed me that Her Majesty has authorized our use of the new Gloucester Meteor jet fighter. We'll give those Jerries what for! **S**

GTIPS!

▶In *CHAOS OVERLORDS* grab and defend every Casino and Bar in your

immediate area first. They'll give you the money to buy the necessary gangs and equipment. Later, seek out a research lab and purchase a gang with a good research bonus to be your weaponsmith. Your first research project should be the Katana or high-powered firearm, followed by some cheap advanced armor.

Remember that your choice of three gangs-for-hire are cards that will sit in your purchase area until you either buy them or discard them. So if you don't have the funds or inclination to hire a gang during a turn, discard the one that you find least appealing until you have three prime ones waiting for you. Always try and have at least one good butt-kicking bunch waiting to be hired at all times.

CHAOS OVERLORDS tips by Martin Cirulis



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Beef Wellington

TalonSoft's BATTLEGROUND: WATERLOO Has The Beef And The Dessert

by Johnny L. Wilson

The Napoleonic Era is often considered to be the Grand Age of Warfare. Indeed, this era had everything: advancements in technology, innovation in tactics, large armies, colorful uniforms, impressive martial arts, and famous battles of grandiose size.

Napoleon, for example, fielded a massive army of 175,000 at the battle of Leipzig, whereas his famous predecessor, Frederick the Great, had a "mere" 77,000 at Hohenfriedberg as his largest force. Napoleon is well-known, of course, for his successful use of cavalry as shock troops, but he also added to the infantry manual. Where the accepted 18th-century tactic was for armies to attack in line, Napoleon had refined the art of massive column attacks by the early 19th century.

BATTLEGROUND: WATERLOO does the best job yet of any computer game to capture the glory, spirit and tactics of this fascinating era of warfare. Yes, the game "only" covers the Waterloo battle. But the historical game takes 44 turns, you have the option of playing shorter scenarios (various venues within the battle), and the real treat is a longer "What if the weather had been better?" version of the battle that's even longer than the "big battle."

Like the previous games in the BATTLEGROUND series, the game takes place on a thinly veiled hex map adorned by beautiful terrain, and you get to command brightly colored units that gleam like painted miniature soldiers—soldiers that are slightly larger than those in previous releases of the series. The visual cues of battle are everywhere evident: dead horses, soldiers, and the flotsam of battle

make clear that there is a cost to the pageantry of war. Additionally, multimedia film clips of Napoleonic reenactments combine with audio files of martial songs and shouts of "Vive le France!" to really make the battle come to life.

(Incidentally) Use of skirmishers is particularly advantageous for defending armies, but they are also useful for cautiously advancing armies.

Just as Napoleon used cavalry so effectively at Eylau, cavalry really makes things

interesting in BCG

WATERLOO. Whenever cavalry is lined up facing an enemy unit (unless it is disordered), it can charge the enemy during the Cavalry Charge Phase. This adds to the effectiveness of the cavalry in the next phase, Melee. Unless that enemy is infantry which has formed into square (literally a square formation designed to keep the faster cavalry from being able to flank line infantry), the cavalry's value is tripled for that

melee. This reflects the demoralization which units usually feel when facing those tons of horseflesh descending upon them.

Of course, once a unit is lined up in the square formation to repel a



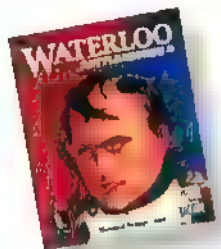
CHAOS THEORY A simultaneous cavalry charge and flank attack by line infantry make these British regulars retreat into a well-ordered unit—with messy results

THE AGE OF MANEUVER

The game flow is most similar to BCG: CRYSTAL. The action is divided into turns with five phases per player in each turn: Movement, Defensive (Opportunity Fire and Formation Changes), Offensive Fire, Cavalry Charge, and Melee. That's true, skirmishers and cavalry have significantly more important roles, and infantry can fight in column formation. Skirmishers can slow down line battalions just as they did in real life. Even facing 16 odds, skirmishers can usually take more than they give in terms of lives. As you would expect, skirmishers are particularly devastating in certain types of terrain (in this game, most notably in the orchards surrounding

Tirailleurs for Dessert, monsieur

The use of the column formation in BATTLEGROUND: WATERLOO reflects an interesting historical insight. When Napoleon's campaigns first began, many of his troops weren't disciplined enough to fight in line. So, initially, he used a lot of tirailleurs (skirmishers supported by columns). Later, as the troops became better trained, he was able to move large rectangular columns against the Allies' line battalions and break through them. By the time of the Waterloo campaign, Wellington had learned to counter the column attacks and they were no longer as effective.



Price: \$49.95

System Requirements: 486-DX33 minimum (P70 or better recommended), Windows 3.1 or 95, 8 MB RAM (16 recommended), 2x CD-ROM drive, SVGA graphics, 5 MB hard disk space (130 MB recommended), mouse, supports all Windows-compatible sound cards.

of Players: 1-2

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designers: John Tiller, Jim Rose and Joseph Hummel

Publisher: TalonSoft

Software

Forest Hill, MD

(410) 821-7282

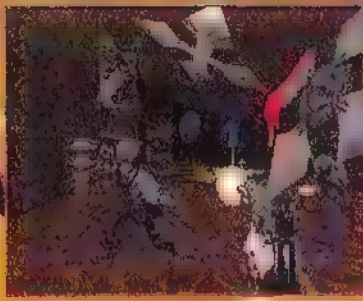
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TAKE THE CHALLENGE and fight your way through the game. You'll see the world as it really is, with all the gore and blood that comes with it. This is a reality check.



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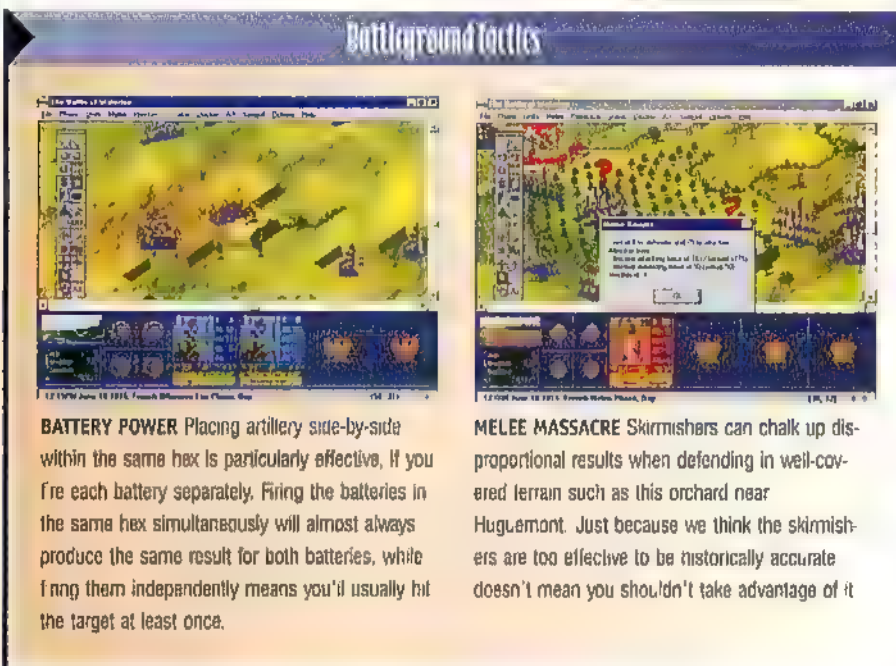
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BATTERY POWER Placing artillery side-by-side within the same hex is particularly effective, if you fire each battery separately. Firing the batteries in the same hex simultaneously will almost always produce the same result for both batteries, while firing them independently means you'd usually hit the target at least once.

MELEE MASSACRE Skirmishers can chalk up disproportional results when defending in well-covered terrain such as this orchard near Hougoumont. Just because we think the skirmishers are too effective to be historically accurate doesn't mean you shouldn't take advantage of it

cavalry charge, they have effectively spread their firepower out around the square. That means that if you can bring a column of infantry or line infantry to bear upon them while they are in square, their return fire will only be about 75 percent as effective as it would have been if you had faced them while they were in line formation.

Finally, artillery is as important to success in *BC: WATERLOO* as it was dear to Napoleon's heart. There are more artillery units in this game than in any computer game I can ever remember. Maneuvering the guns into firing position and choosing

the right targets seems easily the most critical factor in the game.

PERILS OF WAR

BC: WATERLOO is almost the perfect Napoleonic wargame, with a few quibbles. I fented cavalry charges, so that the British AI would form squares, allowing me to decimate them. Alas, I didn't even need to show my cavalry most of the time. The AI forms squares all too readily. Not only that, but the calculations just don't look right for infantry in square. They are supposed to lose 25 percent effectiveness, but it doesn't look like this is always the case.

Also, it may be just because I only like to play the historical scenarios, but it doesn't seem to me like the artificial opponents are aggressive enough. Of course, it may well be that this is a factor of the units forming squares so easily. It's tough to move aggressively in square formation.

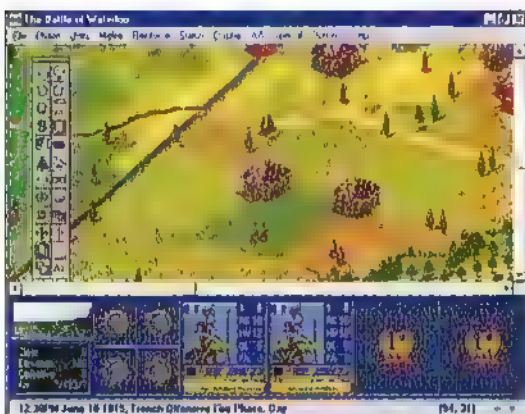
And while I agree that skirmishers were effective historically, they're *too* effective here. I have pretty

serious doubts about the number of 6.1 attacks at 1,650 troops to 50 in which the attacker can lose 150 troops and the defender none. I suppose those could be really thick woods, though. Those South Carolina swamps worked for Francis Marion in the American Revolutionary War.

Another complaint I have has nothing to do with the underlying calculations. It's just that in order to get the most of the visuals in the game, you have to play much of the game zoomed in to the max. Unfortunately, that also means you'll face a lot of scrolling that slows the game down, even on my Pentium 70 laptop. The bigger figures are nicer, but it means you'll usually see less of the map at one time when you're enjoying them.

SPOILS OF WAR

Yet, when it comes down to it, *BATTLEGROUND: WATERLOO* is the best Napoleonic gaming experience I've ever had. I've played miniatures with rules authors, classic board games with champion players, and tried every Napoleonic computer game I could get my hands on. This one captures the flavor, the strategy and the spirit of the era like no other game I've played. If it only had a map and unit editor, it wouldn't leave my hard drive until DVD games use active movie technology to make the figures in the game look like the film clips in the multimedia enhancements to the game. Of course, considering the e-mail and head-to-head capabilities, it may reside permanently on my hard drive anyway. **C**



SQUARE PEGS Only one French cavalry unit can possibly charge the British who are pictured here, yet an amazing amount of infantry units have formed into square. We think this algorithm needs tweaking—but the cavalry charges are still loads of fun.

APPEAL: Anyone interested in the most fascinating era of warfare in history.

PROS: New formations and tactical challenges transform a very good system to excellent. Multimedia enhancements that add to instead of diminish game excitement. Massive troops to command over gorgeous terrain.

CONS: Overuse of square formations, slow scrolling on some machines at closest zoom level and lack of a scenario editor.



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DIFFICULTY LEVEL

INTERMEDIATE

Tactical Errors

Arsenal Fires A Dud Into Windows Territory

By Patrick C. Miller

When Arsenal Publishing released TACOPS for the Macintosh nearly two years ago, PC wargamers like myself could hardly wait for the Windows version of this modern

armored warfare game. The long wait is at last over, but many will probably be disappointed with the results. The reasons are numerous. TACOPS for Windows lacks realism in significant areas, appears out-

Canadian and former Soviet weapon systems from the recent past and near future is impressive. In addition, the point-and-click interface that's used to give units orders and provide information on their status and capabilities is very intuitive, thus reducing the learning curve of an otherwise complex game. The artificial intelligence is quite good and provides challenging software play. The thick manual is also very informative, and Arsenal has good support for TACOPS, offering on-line technical help and playing tips, and releasing patches quickly.

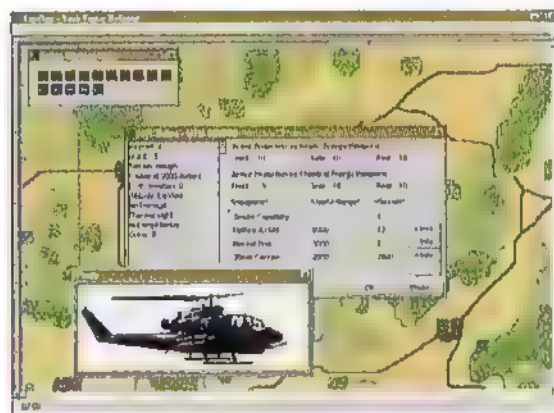
While you might expect a game that runs under Windows to have at least some visual appeal, TACOPS has a face that only a gragnard could love. The maps are ugly, and since most of the terrain is in identical shades of green, determining effects on combat and what you can see is difficult. It doesn't help that the line of sight routine is a convoluted process or that you can't zoom in the map view. Without zoom, you sometimes feel as if you're playing a tiny board game using a pair of tweezers to move unit markers.

TACOPS supports play by e-mail, network and null modem connection. Modem play is much too bothersome though. Rather than providing built-in modem support, the game requires both players to connect with a third-party communications program and then send their orders files back and forth. It's not all that easy and probably not what most players have in mind.

Despite TACOPS' poor showing on Windows, Arsenal is planning a sequel using a more up-to-date engine. Given the company's lagtime in porting TACOPS over to Windows, it will probably be another year before we see it. From the look of things, though, they probably need all the time they can get.

BAD EXECUTION

However, it's the glaring oversights and inaccuracies that prevent TACOPS from being all that it can be. There is no attempt whatsoever to model command, control and communications issues on the modern battlefield. Vehicles equipped with anti-tank guided



HARDWARE HEAVEN TACOPS' database of weapons systems is an informational bonanza for those who thrive on details.

dated with its crude graphics and sound and has numerous bugs.

GOOD STRATEGY

Some aspects of the game are done well. TACOPS accurately portrays the lethality of modern ground combat, as well as the tactics that commanders look try to drill into their troops. Those who employ combined arms teams, emphasize reconnaissance, use bounding overwatch on the attack and properly set up engagement areas on the defense will win many battles. The database of U.S.,

missiles (ATCMs) can fire with great accuracy while moving at full speed, a nearly impossible feat. The time required to reload ATCM launchers isn't taken into account, enabling some units to unrealistically spew missiles like Roman candles at a fireworks display. The type of ammunition and point of impact for artillery fire can be changed seconds before a barrage arrives. Because morale isn't modeled, all units fight until annihilated, creating the impression that you're commanding an army of mindless robots rather than living, breathing humans.

APPEAL: Wargamers whose primary interest is in shooting and moving modern hardware rather than a realistic simulation of tactical combat from the command perspective.

PROS: Challenging AI, two-player capability, good manual, low system requirements, extensive database of modern weaponry.

CONS: Bugs, lack of realism and command perspective, poor graphics and cheesy sound make TACOPS a mediocre simulation.



Price: \$44.95
System

Requirements: IBM compatible 386/33 DX or better, Windows 3.x, 4 MB RAM, 8 MB hard drive space, VGA graphics card, mouse, Windows-compatible sound card

of Players: 2

Protection: None

Designer: I.L.

Holdridge

Publisher: Arsenal

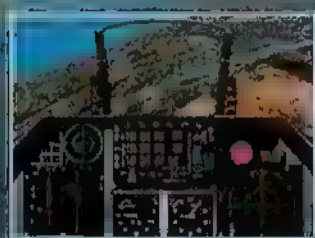
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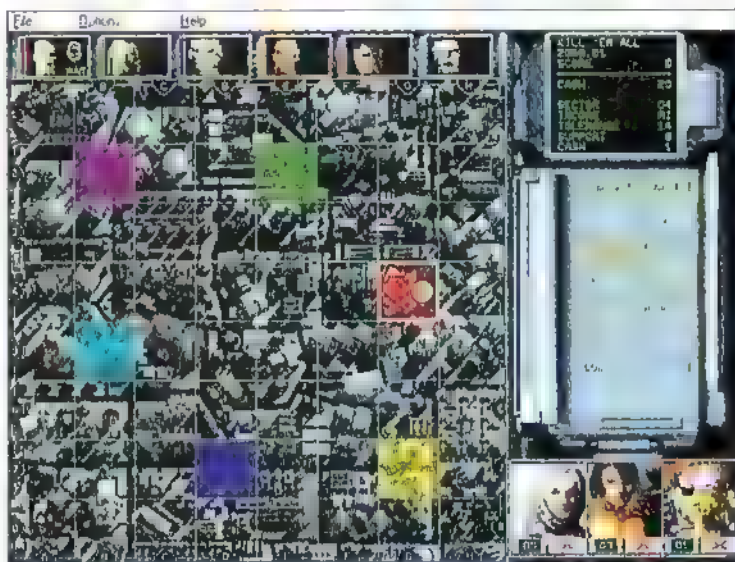
by Martin E. Cirulis

Nobody is happier than I am that we live in an age when dozens of new computer games arrive every quarter. Sometimes, though, I wonder if we are in danger of missing some rough gems in favor of all the shiny baubles. In the old days, there wasn't much to choose from, and consumers were more likely to squeeze all the gameplay they could get from a game before passing judgement. I'm afraid many will overlook *CHAOS OVERLORDS* because it does not make a good first impression; there are no flashy graphics, no live action video and gameplay isn't anything incredible. But remember the old days and stick with this game, because it definitely rewards the player who's willing to put in a little extra effort.

CYBER-M.U.L.E.?

CHAOS is a multiplayer, turn-based strategy game about various crime lords vying for control of the city. There isn't a lot of chrome here. Instead, this game is a trip back to simpler, pre-IBM supremacy days, when an audience didn't flunk twice about a game set on a 6x8 grid, where units were blatant reproductions of wargame info cards, and where the manual explained combat resolution in terms of simulating six-sided die.

Though *CHAOS* allows players to play a number of different scenarios, what they all boil down to is the same style of game, with different victory conditions. This is a game of territory control and economics, where each neighborhood serves as a movement square to be entered and fought in, as well as an economic resource to be exploited. As a Crime Lord, your existence depends on hiring criminal gangs to control territory, which in turn produces the money to hire more, and nastier, gangs. Each neighborhood con-

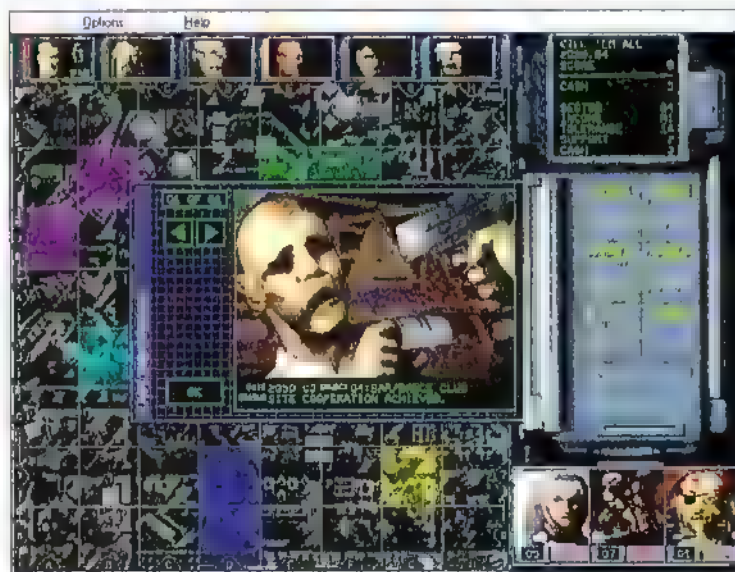


GRID WARS This interface is pretty ugly, and none too intuitive, but once you get past it you'll find a challenging strategy game with a surprising level of depth.

tains three structures that range from casinos to bars to research labs, and all cough up varying amounts of money every turn in what must be the future equivalent of "protection" payments. Structures also confer other benefits according to their purpose, such as improved recovery rates

for units healing in hospital squares, or increased research ability for those gangs in squares with a lab.

As for the gangs themselves, they are your eyes, ears and fists; without them you have nothing. Each gang has a long series of attributes that cover both combat and



DON'T SHOOT ME The name of the game is extortion; you need money to finance your gang, and you get money by controlling businesses in your squares.



Price: \$49.95

System Requirements:

.BM-compatible 486 or better, Win 95, 8 MB RAM, 15 MB hard drive space, SVGA graphics card, 2x CD-ROM drive, mouse, supports major sound cards

of Players: 1-6

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: Stickman Games

Publisher: New World Computing

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REVIEW • CHAOS OVERLORDS

administrative skills for the running of your empire. To take a neighborhood into your pocket, you must first send in at least one gang to initiate control of the sector. Once that is achieved, you may begin taking over the buildings within that sector, or, if you are pressed for cash, a gang can shake down the entire neighborhood for loose change. Be warned, though. Populations can only be shaken down so many times before they get angry and call in the cops for a crackdown. Then the cops will call in the big guns, kill every

center of the game. Instead of just random decoration, which is how they initially come across, each gang is actually a carefully constructed unit that can have an important effect on your basic strategy. Because the gangs you can hire are random, you are forced to adopt subtle changes to your strategy with every new game. For instance, you may have discovered a killer gang/weapon combo, but if you're never dealt the right gang to research the weapon or the ideal one to carry it, you will be in a fair amount of

open up with shotguns on the Disgruntled Postal Workers, who are packing rocket launchers.

ORDER FROM CHAOS

CHAOS OVERLORDS is basically a good little boardgame translation with a few rough corners in presentation, which may turn potential fans off before they reach the gold. For a supposedly Win95 game, it functions more like a proprietary DOS game, with no window shrinking controls. Players minimize the screen at their own risk.

Graphically speaking, this game is incredibly monotonous. CHAOS could use a few random combat resolution effects for truly spectacular match-ups, as well as a more rewarding end to the scenarios and a permanent record of player achievements. Also, the interface is fairly clunky and confusing, requiring a few reads of the manual before any competent usage. As far as gameplay goes, the only real flaw is that the AI plays "Kick the Human" a little too much in a game that is supposed to be a free-for-all.

In the end, what we have here is proof that sometimes your first impressions can be wrong. Of course, this depends on what kind of person you are as well. If you are looking for a slick package that delivers up-front wargame thrills like PANZER GENERAL, then I doubt this game will ever rock your world. On the other hand, if you have the time and patience to play a strategy game that is original and challenging instead of just pretty, then you might want to rent a stronghold in this twisted little neighborhood. **B**



BREAK OUT THE WHIPS The gangs in CHAOS conjure up some hilarious images, and help give the game a little demented personality.

gang in the neighborhood for a few turns, and return everything to its pristine, unexploited state.

Speaking of killing, no matter which scenario you choose to play, conflict with your fellow crimelords is inevitable. So don't forget to hire some nasty hombies and outfit them with the best weapons you have on hand. Gangs attack with a combination of their own attributes and modifiers from equipment they carry, while the defender gets a counter-attack at half-strength. Should a combat round end with a gang at zero hit points, they are gone from the game, and whatever expensive equipment you provided goes to the grave with them.

LOOKING BEYOND THE GRIME

The key to getting your money's worth from CHAOS is realizing that the gangs aren't just a gimmick but are the whole

trouble if you can't come up with something else fast. And the gangs aren't just for fighting. The subtle interaction of their attributes with the economics of the game means you're always eager to find the right bunch for the job you have in mind. You can spend entire games using your favorites to their best advantage (such as bankers for squeezing out extra cash), while desperately trying to protect them from harm. It is this level of the game which truly differentiates it from the pack.

While this may seem a small detail, it was enough to change the game from something I played because it's my job to something I will play long after this assignment is over. Not since the old Illuminati card game have I openly chuckled at some of the images created by a game. You'll know what I mean the first time you see the Angry Nun gang

APPEAL: Only for dedicated strategy gamers who crave a challenging management game and have the patience to look beyond the surface.

PROS: A novel, truly strategic wargame that offers plenty of play and humor with excellent multiplayer potential.

CONS: CHAOS OVERLORDS is not pretty by any means, and it's very hard to get into. It also starts off slowly, and, while deep, is never really exciting. Interface is also confusing.



CITIZENS OF PLANET EARTH

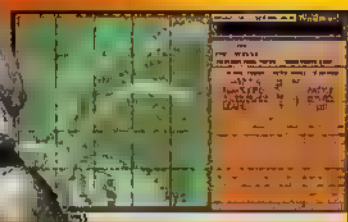
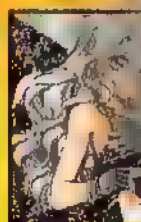
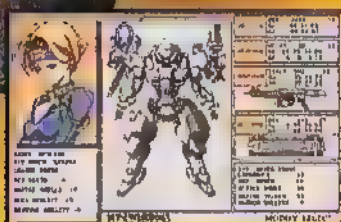
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World Conquest Made Easy

Essential Tips For Winning At Any Level In CIVILIZATION II

by Tim Carter

Work, work, work. Megalomania is a tough calling, you know, and world domination isn't all it's cracked up to be. What's a world conqueror to do? Well, since this is *Computer Gaming World*, not *Psychology Today*, the best your humble scribe can offer is a few tips for more effective conquest in Sid Meier's *CIVILIZATION II*, the current state-of-the-art in games of world domination. Actually, and unfortunately for the more violent dictators in the room, *Civ II* is much more concerned with development than destruction. Winning requires

a much greater emphasis on building than its predecessor, and it's the peaceful (or restrained) megalomaniac who will be rewarded with victory.

THE BIG PICTURE

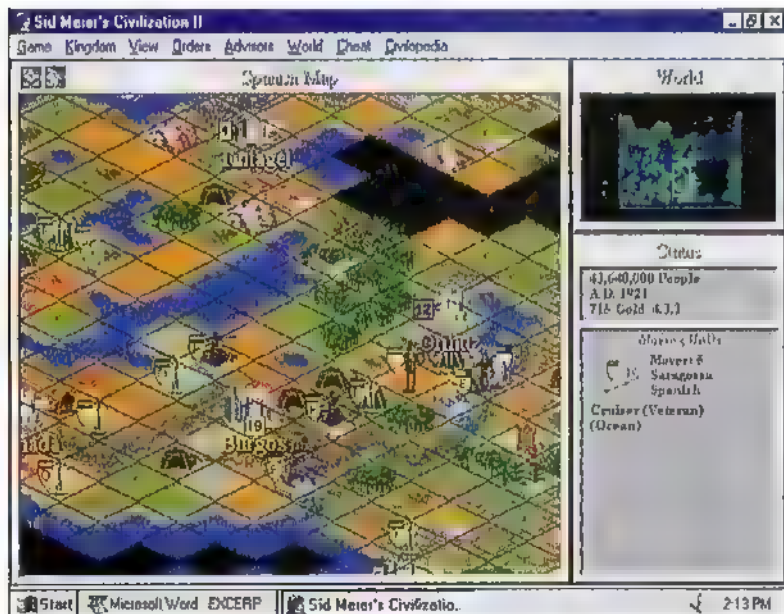
Winning in *Civ II* at the all-new Deity level of difficulty is challenging. The computer opponents develop very quickly and are quite unforgiving in their diplomatic attitudes. Screw them over once and they are unlikely to forget it—ever. Also, if you gain any kind of substantive lead over the computer players they will eventually form an alliance against you, trading technology until they have caught up with or exceeded your empire's technological development.

This competitive environment can

dramatic and often irreparable harm if they are inadequately defended. The computer AI in *Civ II* likes sneak attacks, and is quite capable of using combined arms to overwhelm several cities quickly.

Make sure your empire always grows in all three directions at an equal pace. Plan your empire to provide you with all of the necessary resources from the start. Your growth will be continuous, your empire secure, and success considerably more likely.

In *Civ II*, the square you build on automatically generates a shield—even if no resources exist on the terrain. So, build beside resources, rather than on top of them. This can literally double the early productivity of your city.



THE ART OF STONE WALLS Build fortresses around your cities early—they can provide a second line of defense and can also be used as springboards for invasions of neighbors.

punish players that neglect any particular aspect of their empire for very long. If you concentrate on military forces, for instance, you had better capture many enemy cities quickly, or you will find that all or most of the other players will have built up a substantial technological edge while you were busy bashing heads.

Likewise, strong economic and technological empires can suffer

IN THE BEGINNING

As with all exploration and development games, one of the most important elements of success is a fast start. In *Civ II* it is absolutely imperative that players get as many cities as possible started early in the game.

Build your first city as quickly as possible, definitely within the first five turns. Build a militia unit first, then settlers. Until the territorial borders of your empire are reached, every second unit/improvement built by all cities should be a settler. Garrisons are important to keep barbarians away, but barbarians are fairly rare on regular settings.

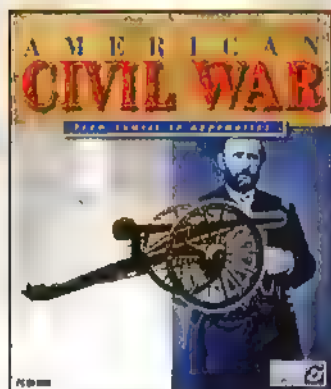
At deity level, population unrest is a problem right from the word "go." Therefore, the first improvement built in each city should be a temple. Barracks and granaries must wait until your citizenry is placated, otherwise there won't be

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enough workers in the fields to keep cities growing, to produce trade, and to generate the resources needed to build all those settlers.

Trade is important also—not the technological advancement, but the money generated by each city. All city squares that are in use should be generating trade of some kind (except mines), and it is worth building roads right from the start of the game to make sure this happens. Without a healthy cash flow, it is very difficult to start and sustain an aggressive research program.

Another key to starting quickly is con-

Huts in unexplored territory can provide free military units as well, not to mention cash and technology, so go after them as quickly as military production allows. The many benefits outweigh any possibility of unleashing a barbarian horde.

verting to a monarchy as soon as possible. Monarchy allows greater food production, reduces corruption and makes limited military production more affordable.

Research monarchy as quickly as possible.

As a rule of thumb, only build enough

Winning a Democracy

Waging war while ruling by democracy is a little tricky. Here are a few tips on how to do so effectively.

1) Manage unrest with wonders. Woman's Suffrage and the Cure for Cancer both diminish the negative effects of large overseas armies. J.S. Bach's cathedral is also nice, since it effectively gives you a cathedral in every city. Use freight or caravans to accelerate wonder production so enemy civs don't build these essential wonders first. The AI will typically begin construction of a wonder immediately after it acquires the appropriate advance.

2) Increase production with the Hoover Dam. This wonder will boost production in all your cities and also cleans up pollution. The production boost will help you build units and space ship parts, while the clean air will help in your final score.

3) Use railroads for a rapid deployment force that can move anywhere on your continents instantaneously. This military striking force can then be rapidly shifted via rail from one trouble spot to the next.

4) Once your cities have SAMs, build airfields a few squares away and garrison them with fighters. Bombers have a tendency to overcome intercepting fighters defending a city. Let the bombers expend themselves on Infantry defenders, then mop up during your turn.



RIVER BONUS Your first cities should be built on rivers to take advantage of their increased trade and rapid movement bonus.

military units to explore the surrounding area and to provide a minimum defense—usually two phalanxes per city is plenty. Do not go to war with any civilizations you happen to meet unless they are very close to your heartland and threaten to cut off your settlers from further expansion. Even then, it is often wiser (and cheaper) to look for other means to expand into rather than take on a well-established empire.

On the other hand, if you encounter a computer opponent early in the game, with only a few cities, it is usually a good idea to suspend all other activities and concentrate on eliminating them as quickly as possible. This way you'll clear away a larger area in which to grow.

HOLDING ON TO MOMENTUM

Once your empire is underway, focus on keeping your growth rate as high as possible. Switch some settlers from city building to irrigation, mining, and road building. Somewhere around 1 AD my empires usually hit a cash crunch. Upgrading to the republic will generate more revenue—thus keeping the people happy and research moving at the right speed, but at a cost to shield production. If you plan to go to the republic early in the game, begin digging mines as soon as you have the settlers to spare. This will allow your key industrial cities to keep building once maintenance costs rise.

I prefer to remain in monarchy for as long as possible. Because military units are cheap, particularly if you remain on the defensive, your overall economic growth is better under a monarchical government than a republic. To keep your research from stagnating, make extensive use of caravans to boost your trade figures. Most large cities should produce three caravans, and you should endeavor to have your caravans reach the best foreign cities.

This strategy can double the trade generated by big cities under a monarchy, thus keeping research moving at a decent pace. Caravans also generate cash when they first arrive at their destinations. If

For a good defense in the early and middle stages of gaming, the most useful wonders are the Great Wall (automatic peace) and Leonardo's Workshop (automatic upgrades). These two wonders will allow you to defend yourself relatively easily without burdening your economic growth or your research efforts.

your caravans go to foreign cities which demand the goods they are carrying, this initial payment can be substantial. By using this money to buy city improvements, you can accelerate the development of your empire considerably.

Once your cities have the minimum

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This is war. Messy and mean.

Somebody's going to get hurt

and it ain't gonna be me.

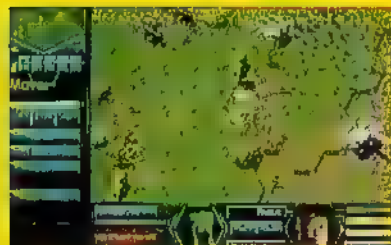
I've got you in my sights

and you look like a sucker.

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improvements (barracks, granary, temple) and have sent the caravans overseas, it is usually a good idea to start thinking about building a wonder or two. During the middle game, I don't recommend extensive military action.

DEMOCRATIC WARFARE

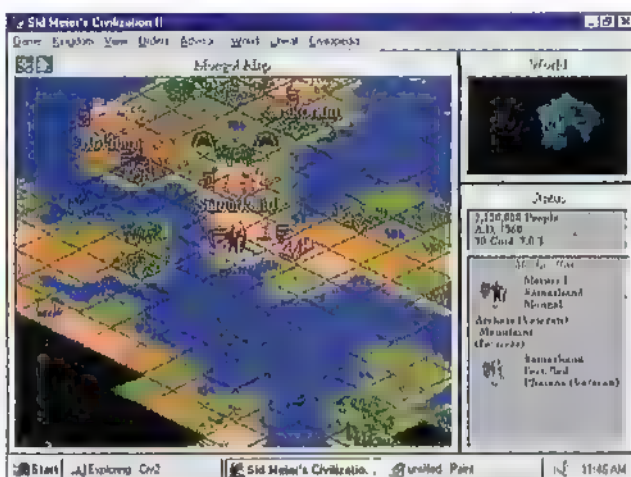
The increases in production and mobility that come with the discovery of the railroad make it possible to continue economic and military growth even under a democratic government. Once your empire begins to feel the effects of the railroad, switch to democracy and stay there.

The extra trade established through caravan routes earlier in the game pays even higher dividends under a democracy. You can afford to spend 30 percent on luxury items as well, ensuring a happy population in general and repeated "We love the president days," which greatly increases the power of your cities.

Combined Arms And City Dashing

The computer not only does a good job of attacking cities, but is also pretty good at defending them. Here are a few tips on the effective use of combined arms to reduce enemy defenses.

1. Begin your attack by using aircraft, naval units, or cruise missiles to destroy the bulk of the defenders.
2. Use spies to sabotage key defensive improvements such as city walls, coastal batteries, and SAM sites.
3. Try to surround the city before capturing it. The more units you have in the countryside, the less partisans you will have to deal with later.
4. Often the computer sues for peace following the fall of a city, then counterattacks a few turns later. If you are ruled by a democracy and cannot break treaties yourself, make sure that key defensive positions (such as forts or mountains) are in your hands before making the final assault.
5. Make sure you have adequate units to defend a city before taking it. Trading control of a city not only reduces its value, it can provide the computer with an easy way to steal a lot of your technology as well.
6. The computer often sends spies into newly fallen cities to take technology as well. Remember to include spies of your own in all frontier garrisons.



BOTTLENECK The thin land strip here makes for great defense. Always fortify key mountain squares and garrison them with several strong defensive troops to create nearly invincible positions.

else, speed. Your points will improve with a large cargo, but getting there first is far more important. Even if you have SDI, a determined opponent with nuclear weapons can keep you away from his capital city for the 8-10 turns that the computer's ships usually take to reach Alpha Centauri. You are much better off keeping your opposition from launching, and launching your own ship as soon as it is capable of reaching its destination in under 15 turns. Once your colony is guaranteed of success, shift your spending to



TRADING PLACES Trade is an indispensable part of any large empire's economy. This city derives half of its income from trade, leaving more financial resources for research and luxury.

Start building the appropriate wonders (see Democracy sidebar), and once you have them all built, you should be on your way to a balanced civilization that no longer depends on immediate city improvements for growth or stability. At this point, and with the advent of bombers, you should be able to go on the offensive (see Combined Arms sidebar). You'll want to lean especially hard on any civs with space ships under construction.

The race to space requires, above all

luxury items or to buying enemy cities. Boosting overall happiness pays very high dividends when the final points are tallied.

By holding off on major military spending until your empire is stable, and by keeping economic development and research moving forward regularly, smart players should have little trouble staying ahead of the computer opponents. In the endgame, go for the throat. Once you have SDI there is nothing to lose, and a good multipower war can make those long final turns a lot more fun. **E**

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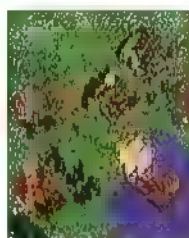
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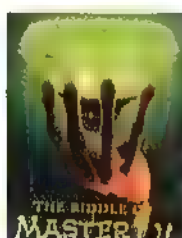
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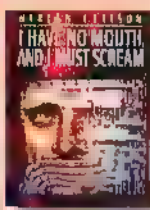
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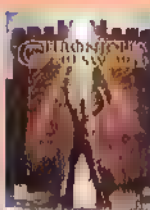
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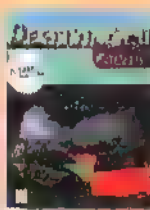
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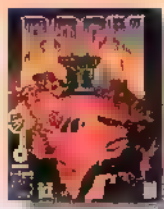
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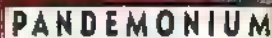
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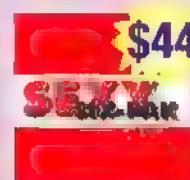
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- Nature's Impact \$16
- Naughty But Nice \$24
- New Lovers \$24
- New Movie 6 Pk 2 \$44
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- Silent Strangers \$24
- Southern Beauties 2 \$32
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MOTION

- Strap on Sally 2 \$26
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- Superstar of Porn \$24
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- Temptation \$13
- The Cowen 2 \$20
- Tokyo Nightlife \$46
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- Tracy I Love You \$24
- Twins Angels 2 \$20
- Ultimate Tokyo \$30
- Ultra Sex 2 \$12
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- Virgins Vol 3 \$30

GAY

- Bacchus Six Pack \$45
- Beef 2 \$25
- Blue Bang \$20
- Black Workout \$20
- Boyz and \$20
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- Boys of Paris \$17
- Cruising Ground \$20
- David \$20
- Dream Lovers \$29
- Home Boys \$24
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- Busty Babes 4 \$39
- Celebrity Nudes \$25
- Domini A-Trix \$19
- Elite College Girls \$24
- Erotic Playground \$22
- Fantasy Fries \$16
- Heavenly Bodies 6 \$39
- Japanese Pearls W05 \$38
- La Femme Venus \$20
- Legs Laca & Angro \$24
- Nova Collection 2 \$24
- Oriente Stars \$32
- Select a Pet \$29
- Tabloid Beauties \$26
- Tokyo Glam Girls \$29
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GDI

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3DO

- Blond Justice \$29
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Welcome to the Cooperstown of Computer Games. Here, raised upon pedestals, you'll find the games that broke

the records, established the benchmarks, and held gamers in delighted trances for hours untold.

Alone in the Dark

I-Motion, 1993

When you talk about the decline in action-oriented adventure games, no story is more telling than the ALONE IN THE DARK series. The original earned a place in our Hall of Fame because of its creative use of 3D technology to place gamers within a chilling adventure game context. ALONE IN THE DARK's immediate ancestor, OUT OF THIS WORLD, proved that 3D technology was useful for cinematic action games, but AITD went much further in creating an effective gaming atmosphere. Despite the number of times that I-Motion and others have returned to themes of Lovecraftian-style horror, ALONE IN THE DARK is the only time they've been fully successful. The private investigator you portray looks awkward now, but at the time, the 3D character walking into the dark and mysterious house was wonderfully creepy. Hell-hounds, pianos that played by themselves, creaky stairs—this game made every gothic horror cliché fun again. While some of the maneuvering could be tedious, line of sight and maneuvering around objects became an integral part of the adventure game experience. The action portions of the original AITD have sadly been over-emphasized in the sequels at the expense of the storyline; let's hope that I-Motion can recapture the magic. We can always use another classic horror game.



Wolfenstein 3D

id Software, 1992

WOLFENSTEIN 3D is the grandfather of modern-day 3D shooters like Duke NUKEM 3D and Quake. If you had to put it on the evolutionary chart, it would go somewhere between *homo erectus* and penicillin (there's a pun there somewhere, but we're not looking). The original CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN had you running around in an old castle guarded by Nazi jailers. Fairly typical of early Apple II games, it was soon forgotten. WOLFENSTEIN 3D took the simple line and fill graphic mazes of the earlier game and transformed them into a smooth-scrolling, rapid-fire, texture-mapped environment. The details of the castle were fewer than those of ULTIMA UNDERWORLD, but they featured Nazi banners, stained glass windows starring old hairlip himself, and lots of nice touches like chandeliers and coats of armor. Gamers hungry for action quickly warmed to the fast pace of the game, accentuated by the large active area of the screen, and the excellent use of sound and perspective—all of which would later be perfected with id's masterpiece, DOOM. Although newer, sexier 3D games have now replaced WOLFENSTEIN as the latest adrenaline pumpers around, the game should be remembered for pulling shareware back on the gaming map, and for sparking a first person shooting craze that lives to this day.



Inductees Prior To 1989

BATTLE CHESS (Interplay Productions, 1988)
CHESSMASTER (The Software Toolworks, 1986)
DUNGEON MASTER (FTL Software, 1987)
EARL WEAVER BASEBALL (Electronic Arts, 1986)
EMPIRE (Interstel, 1978)
F-19 STEALTH FIGHTER (MicroProse, 1988)
GETTYSBURG: THE TURNING POINT (SSI, 1986)
KAMPFRUPPE (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
MECH BRIGADE (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
MIGHT & MAGIC (New World Computing, 1986)
M.U.L.E. (Electronic Arts, 1983)
PIRATES (MicroProse, 1987)
SIMCITY (Maxis, 1987)
STARFLIGHT (Electronic Arts, 1986)
THE BARD'S TALE (Electronic Arts, 1985)
ULTIMA III (Origin Systems, 1983)
ULTIMA IV (Origin Systems, 1985)
WAR IN RUSSIA (Strategic Simulations, 1984)
WASTELAND (Interplay Productions, 1986)
WIZARDRY (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
ZORK (Infocom, 1981)

ALONE IN THE DARK
(I-Motion, 1992)

BETRAYAL AT KRODNOR
(Dynamix, 1993)

DAY OF THE TENTACLE
(LucasArts, 1993)

DOOM
(id Software, 1993)

FALCON 3.0
(Spectrum HoloByte, 1991)

FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO
(Dynamix, 1993)

GUNSHIP
(MicroProse, 1989)

HARPOON
(Three Sixty Pacific, 1989)

KING'S QUEST V
(Sierra On-Line, 1990)

LEMMINGS
(Psygnosis, 1991)

LINKS 386 PRO
(Access Software, 1992)

M-1 TANK PLATOON
(MicroProse, 1989)

MASTER OF ORION
(MicroProse, 1993)

RAILROAD TYCOON
(MicroProse, 1990)

RED BARRON
(Dynamix, 1990)

SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION
(MicroProse, 1991)

THEIR FINEST HOUR
(LucasArts, 1989)

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND
(LucasArts, 1990)

ULTIMA VI
(Origin Systems, 1990)

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD
(Origin Systems, 1992)

WING COMMANDER I & II
(Origin Systems, 1990-91)

WOLFENSTEIN 3-D
(id Software, 1992)

Computer game programs have grown so massive and the number of hardware configurations has become so huge that incompatibilities and glitches are frustratingly common.

Software fixes, or "patches," for buggy programs have become a necessary evil until we reach the golden age of standardized platforms and bug-free programs.

Allied General Victory

Conditions This self-extracting zipped file contains a text and Word For Windows file outlining all of the victory conditions for every scenario in ALLIED GENERAL.

Angel Devoid Update Fixes a problem with the SONY CDU 33A CD-ROM Player accessing Disk 2 of ANGEL DEVOID. If you do not have this CD-ROM player, DO NOT download this update. Once unzipped, follow the instructions as outlined in the Readme.txt file. Although this update has only been tested on the CD player listed above, if you experience a lockup while inserting Disk 2, you may opt to try this patch.

ATF MIDI Sound Update

Allows gamers with IRQ 10 to play the game with sound. This file is for ATF users who selected the MIDI install. To run this self-extracting executable file, follow the instructions in the text file.

ATF Digital Sound Update

Allows customers with IRQ 10 to play the game with sound. This file is for ATF users who selected the Digital install. To run this self-extracting executable file, follow the instructions in the text file.

The Civil War: 1861-1864

Update Fixes lingering crashes especially regarding naval units. You must have V1.13 to use this update. Unzip this file directly into your Civil War directory.

Civilization 2 V1.11 Upgrade

The latest upgrade includes several fixes.

Conquest of the New World

V1.06 Provides updates and additions to the game. Instructions are as follows: 1) Copy the file CNW106.ZIP to the directory that contains your

copy of CONQUEST 2) At the DOS prompt in the directory where CONQUEST is installed, type PKUNZIP CNW106 -d -o to install the update.

Dark Seed II Update Fixes problems with options menu, save game, sound and more. Unzip DS2PAT2.ZIP and copy the files into your DARK SEED II game directory.

Duke Nukem 3D V1.3d Patch Updates your shareware copy of DUKE NUKEM 3D V1.1 to V1.3d. This patch requires that you have your copy of V1.1 on your hard drive and installed before use.

DUKE NUKEM 3D V1.1 Patch Updates your shareware copy of DUKE NUKEM 3D V1.0 to V1.1. You need to have your copy of V1.0 installed before use.

Strife 1.2 Update

Fixes a bug in multiplayer mode that kicks out one of the players with a "Consistency Failure" message. The patch is called V12_DOS.EXE (or V12_WIN.EXE for Windows users).

Rise and Rule of Ancient Empires Updates RISE AND RULE to V1.01. Adds modem play to Windows 3.1, addresses problems building 3rd-level buildings in city mode and enhances the AI.

Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer 2 V1.01 Updates the game to V1.01. Adds joystick calibration feature, enhances DirectSound capabilities, allows weapons to be fired even without a weapons lock.

SU-27 Flanker V1.1 Upgrade Updates V1.0 of SSI's SU-27 Flanker to V1.1 and includes a detailed list of fixes and new features including rearview mirrors, network head-to-head play (using IPX or TCP/IP),

increased rearward view, Mig 31 opponent, improved run graphic, and many others. Download this file into a temporary directory, go to that directory and type SU27V11 to extract files. README.11 text file contains complete installation instructions.

The TACOPS for Windows

V1.02 Update Contains 10 new user-requested enhancements, 4 new US/Canadian units, 13 new OPFOR units (including North Korean MBT's and IFV), and a number of bug fixes. The update consists of an update installation program, several data files, and a text file detailing the features of the update. You must have the retail version of TACOPS for Windows V1.00 or V1.01 to use the patch. Use either WinZip or PKUNZIP 2.04g to unzip the patch.



Now Patches are on disk.

ZDNet

These patches can usually be downloaded from the major online networks (CompuServe, GENie, ZDNet) and Computer Gaming World's Web site (<http://www.zdnet.com/gaming/>) but can also be obtained from individual software publisher's Web sites or direct from the publisher with proof of purchase.

Publisher Web Sites

Many of these patches are available directly from the publishers, at the following sites:

Accolade: <http://www.accolade.com>
Activision: <http://www.activision.com>
Apogee/3d Realms: <http://www.apogee1.com>
Bethesda: <http://www.bethsoft.com>
Blizzard: <http://www.blizzard.com/tech.htm>
Bullfrog: <http://www.ea.com/bullfrog.html>
Domark: <http://www.domark.com>
EA: <http://www.ea.com>
Interactive Magic: <http://www.imagicgames.com/games.html>
Interplay: <http://www.interplay.com>
Looking Glass: <http://www.vie.com/igt/utility.html>
LucasArts: <http://www.lucasarts.com>
MicroProse: <http://www.microprose.com/mpsfiles.html>
Microsoft: <http://www.microsoft.com>
Mindscape: <http://www.mindscape.com>
New World Computing: <http://www.nwcompulog.com>
Ocean: <http://www.el2000.com>
Origin: <http://www.ea.com/origin/english/index.html>
Papyrus: <http://www.sierra.com>
Philips: <http://spider.media.philips.com/media/games>
Sierra On-Line: <http://www.sierra.com>
Spectrum HoloByte: <http://www.trek.microprose.com/shfiles.html>
SSI: <http://www.ssi-online.com>
Take 2: <http://westoi.com/~take2/ripper.htm#patches>
Velocity: <http://www.velocitygames.com>
Virgin: <http://www.vie.com/html/viesupport.html>

THE COMPUTER GAMING POLL • A MONTHLY SURVEY OF THE READERS OF COMPUTER GAMING



You've read our take on the latest games, now here's a chance to see what your fellow gamers think. The CGW Top 100 is a monthly tally of game ratings provided by our readers. Approximately 50 games are rated each month, and the results are added to the aggregate results from past months. This historical database serves as a terrific reference for what you, the gamers, feel are the best plays in gaming.

TOP ACTION GAMES

| RANK | GAME | COMPANY | SCORE |
|------|----------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| 1 | Crusader: No Remorse | Origin | 9.95 |
| 2 | Marathon 2 | Bungie | 9.86 |
| 3 | DOOM II | id Software | 9.77 |
| 4 | Dark Forces | LucasArts | 9.70 |
| 5 | Virtual Pool | Interplay | 9.52 |
| 6 | Magic Carpet | Electronic Arts | 9.48 |
| 7 | System Shock | Origin | 9.19 |
| 8 | The Need For Speed | Electronic Arts | 9.12 |
| 9 | TerraNova: Strike Force Centauri | Virgin | 9.11 |
| 10 | Heretic | id Software | 9.08 |

TOP ADVENTURE GAMES

| RANK | GAME | COMPANY | SCORE |
|------|----------------------|-----------------|-------|
| 1 | Gabriel Knight 2 | Sierra | 9.84 |
| 2 | Zork Nemesis | Activision | 9.57 |
| 3 | Full Throttle | LucasArts | 9.44 |
| 4 | Mission Critical | Legend | 9.35 |
| 5 | Woodruff & Schnibble | Sierra | 9.28 |
| 6 | Relentless | Electronic Arts | 9.12 |
| 7 | Ecstasia | Psygnosis | 9.09 |
| 8 | Under A Killing Moon | Access | 9.04 |
| 9 | Ripper | Take 2 | 9.01 |
| 10 | Legend of Kyrandia 3 | Virgin/Westwood | 8.94 |

TOP CLASSIC/PUZZLE GAMES

| RANK | GAME | COMPANY | SCORE |
|------|------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| 1 | You Don't Know Jack | Berkeley Systems | 9.01 |
| 2 | Incredible Toons | Dynamix | 8.86 |
| 3 | Incredible Machine 2 | Sierra | 8.85 |
| 4 | Monopoly | Virgin/Westwood | 8.73 |
| 5 | Connections | Discovery Channel | 8.66 |
| 6 | Clockwerk | Spectrum HoloByte | 8.25 |
| 7 | Hodj n' Podj | Virgin Interactive | 8.16 |
| 8 | Shanghai-Great Moments | Activision | 7.75 |
| 9 | TriTryst | Virgin | 7.71 |
| 10 | Lemmings 3D | Psygnosis | 7.50 |

TOP SIMULATION/SPACE COMBAT GAMES

| RANK | GAME | COMPANY | SCORE |
|------|----------------------|-----------------|-------|
| 1 | Wing Commander 3 | Origin | 10.57 |
| 2 | Wing Commander IV | Origin | 10.22 |
| 3 | McchWarrior 2 | Activision | 10.05 |
| 4 | NASCAR Racing | Papyrus | 10.01 |
| 5 | U.S. Marine Fighters | Electronic Arts | 9.78 |
| 6 | U.S. Navy Fighters | Electronic Arts | 9.60 |
| 7 | EF2000 | Ocean | 9.56 |
| 8 | Wings of Glory | Origin | 9.56 |
| 9 | Flight Unlimited | Looking Glass | 9.51 |
| 10 | Accs of the Deep | Dynamix | 9.38 |

TOP SPORTS GAMES

| RANK | GAME | COMPANY | SCORE |
|------|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| 1 | NBA Live '95 | EA Sports | 9.86 |
| 2 | NHL Hockey | EA Sports | 9.70 |
| 3 | Front Page Sports Football 95 | Sierra | 9.64 |
| 4 | FPS Football Pro 96 | Sierra | 9.19 |
| 5 | PGA Tour Golf 486 | EA Sports | 8.93 |
| 6 | Front Page Sports Baseball | Dynamix | 8.76 |
| 7 | Grand Prix Manager | Spectrum HoloByte | 8.72 |
| 8 | Hardball IV | Accolade | 8.70 |
| 9 | Hardball 5 | Accolade | 8.36 |
| 10 | Tony LaRussa 3 | Stormfront Studios | 8.12 |

TOP STRATEGY GAMES

| RANK | GAME | COMPANY | SCORE |
|------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------|
| 1 | Civilization II | Microprose | 10.58 |
| 2 | Warcraft II | Blizzard | 10.50 |
| 3 | Command & Conquer | Virgin/Westwood | 10.00 |
| 4 | Jagged Alliance | Sir-Tech | 9.81 |
| 5 | Heroes of Might & Magic | New World Computing | 9.77 |
| 6 | Master of Magic | MicroProse | 9.66 |
| 7 | Warcraft | Blizzard | 9.64 |
| 8 | Fantasy General | SSI | 9.64 |
| 9 | C&C: Covert Ops | Virgin/Westwood | 9.48 |
| 10 | X-COM: Terror from the Deep | MicroProse | 9.38 |

TOP ROLE PLAYING GAMES

| RANK | GAME | COMPANY | SCORE |
|------|-------------------------------|---------------------|-------|
| 1 | Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen | New World Computing | 9.07 |
| 2 | Anvil of Dawn | New World Computing | 9.04 |
| 3 | Ravenloft: Stone Prophet | SSI | 8.98 |
| 4 | Wolf | Sanctuary Woods | 8.64 |
| 5 | Stonekeep | Interplay | 8.44 |
| 6 | Menzoberranzan | SSI | 8.26 |
| 7 | Mordor | TDA | 8.00 |
| 8 | Dark Sun: Wake of the Ravager | SSI | 7.64 |
| 9 | Thunderscape | SSI | 7.63 |
| 10 | Drift | Sir Tech | 7.00 |

TOP WARGAMES

| RANK | GAME | COMPANY | SCORE |
|------|---------------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Panzer General | SSI | 10.46 |
| 2 | Steel Panthers | SSI | 10.36 |
| 3 | Rise of the West | RAW | 9.63 |
| 4 | Flight Commander 2 Mission Bldr | Avalon Hill | 9.48 |
| 5 | Battleground: Gettysburg | Ta onsoft | 9.40 |
| 6 | Stalingrad | Avalon Hill | 9.38 |
| 7 | Flight Commander 2 | Avalon Hill | 9.35 |
| 8 | Custer's Last Command | Incredible Simulations | 9.12 |
| 9 | Perfect General II | OOP | 8.96 |
| 10 | Romance of 3 Kingdoms IV | Koei | 8.75 |

Reader Poll #143

| | GAME | COMPANY | TYPE | SCORE |
|------|----------------------------------|------------------------|------|-------|
| ★ 1 | Civilization II | Microprose | ST | 10.58 |
| ★ 2 | Wing Commander 3 | Origin | SI | 10.57 |
| 3 | Warcraft II | Blizzard | ST | 10.50 |
| ★ 4 | Panzer General | SSI | WG | 10.46 |
| 5 | Steel Panthers | SSI | WG | 10.38 |
| 6 | Wing Commander IV | Origin | SI | 10.22 |
| 7 | MechWarrior 2 | Activision | SI | 10.05 |
| ★ 8 | NASCAR Racing | Papyrus | SI | 10.01 |
| 9 | Command & Conquer | Virgin/Westwood | ST | 10.00 |
| ★ 10 | Crusader: No Remorse | Origin | AC | 9.95 |
| 11 | Marathon 2 | Bungie | AC | 9.86 |
| ★ 12 | NBA Live '95 | EA Sports | SP | 9.86 |
| 13 | Gabriel Knight 2 | Sierra | AD | 9.84 |
| 14 | Jagged Alliance | Sir-Tech | ST | 9.81 |
| 15 | DOOM II | id Software | AC | 9.77 |
| | Heroes of Might & Magic | New World Computing | ST | 9.77 |
| 17 | U.S. Marine Fighters | Electronic Arts | SI | 9.76 |
| 18 | NHL Hockey | EA Sports | SP | 9.70 |
| | Dark Forces | LucasArts | AC | 9.70 |
| 20 | Master of Magic | MicroProse | ST | 9.68 |
| 21 | Front Page Sports Football 95 | Sierra | SP | 9.64 |
| | Fantasy General | SSI | ST | 9.64 |
| | Warcraft | Blizzard | ST | 9.64 |
| 24 | Rise of the West | RAW | WG | 9.63 |
| 25 | U.S. Navy Fighters | Electronic Arts | SI | 9.60 |
| 26 | Zork Nemesis | Activision | AD | 9.57 |
| 27 | Wings of Glory | Origin | SI | 9.56 |
| | EF2000 | Ocean | SI | 9.56 |
| 29 | Virtual Pool | Interplay | AC | 9.52 |
| 30 | Flight Unlimited | Looking Glass | SI | 9.51 |
| 31 | C&C: Covert Ops | Virgin/Westwood | ST | 9.48 |
| | Flight Commander 2 Mission Bldr | Avalon Hill | WG | 9.48 |
| | Magic Carpet | Electronic Arts | AC | 9.48 |
| 34 | Full Throttle | LucasArts | AD | 9.44 |
| 35 | Battleground: Gettysburg | Talonsoft | WG | 9.40 |
| 36 | Stalingrad | Avalon Hill | WG | 9.38 |
| | X-COM: Terror from the Deep | MicroProse | ST | 9.38 |
| | Aces of the Deep | Dynamix | SI | 9.38 |
| 38 | Mission Critical | Legend | AD | 9.35 |
| | Flight Commander 2 | Avalon Hill | WG | 9.35 |
| 41 | Silent Hunter | SSI | SI | 9.31 |
| 42 | Woodruff & Schnibble | Sierra | AD | 9.28 |
| 43 | Warlords II Deluxe | SSG | ST | 9.27 |
| 44 | System Shock | Origin | AC | 9.19 |
| | FPS Football Pro 96 | Sierra | SP | 9.19 |
| 46 | Custer's Last Command | Incredible Simulations | WG | 9.12 |
| | The Need For Speed | Electronic Arts | AC | 9.12 |
| | Relentless | Electronic Arts | AD | 9.12 |
| 49 | TerraNova: Strike Force Centauri | Virgin | AC | 9.11 |
| 50 | Ecstasia | Psygnosis | AD | 9.09 |

| | GAME | COMPANY | TYPE | SCORE |
|------|-------------------------------|---------------------|------|-------|
| 51 | Heretic | id Software | AC | 9.08 |
| ★ 52 | Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen | New World Computing | RP | 9.07 |
| | Advanced Tactical Fighters | Electronic Arts | SI | 9.07 |
| 54 | Hexen | Raven Software | AC | 9.04 |
| | Under A Killing Moon | Access | AD | 9.04 |
| | Anvil of Dawn | New World Computing | RP | 9.04 |
| 57 | Ripper | Take 2 | AD | 9.01 |
| ★ 58 | You Don't Know Jack | Berkeley Systems | CP | 9.01 |
| 59 | Ravenloft: Stone Prophet | SSI | RP | 8.98 |
| 60 | Perfect General II | QOP | WG | 8.98 |
| 61 | Rayman | Ubisoft | AC | 8.95 |
| 62 | Riddle of Master Lu | Sanctuary Woods | AD | 8.94 |
| | Legend of Kyandia 3 | Virgin/Westwood | AD | 8.94 |
| | Transport Tycoon | MicroProse | ST | 8.94 |
| 65 | PGA Tour Golf 486 | EA Sports | SP | 8.93 |
| 66 | Earthsiege 2 | Sierra | SI | 8.88 |
| 67 | Descent | Interplay | AC | 8.86 |
| | Incredible Toons | Dynamix | CP | 8.86 |
| 69 | Incredible Machine 2 | Sierra | CP | 8.85 |
| 70 | Front Page Sports Baseball | Dynamix | SP | 8.76 |
| 71 | Romance of 3 Kingdoms IV | Koei | WG | 8.75 |
| | Star Trek: TNG, Final Unity | Spectrum HoloByte | AD | 8.75 |
| 73 | Monopoly | Virgin/Westwood | CP | 8.73 |
| | Allied General | SSI | WG | 8.73 |
| 75 | 1830 | Avalon Hill | ST | 8.72 |
| | Grand Prix Manager | Spectrum HoloByte | SP | 8.72 |
| 77 | Hardball IV | Accolade | SP | 8.70 |
| 78 | Buried in Time | Sanctuary Woods | AD | 8.65 |
| 79 | Mortal Kombat 3 | GT Interactive | AC | 8.64 |
| | Wolf | Sanctuary Woods | RP | 8.64 |
| | King's Quest VII | Sierra | AD | 8.64 |
| 82 | Caesar II | Sierra | ST | 8.62 |
| | Superheroes of Hoboken | Legend | AD | 8.62 |
| | Phantasmagoria | Sierra | AD | 8.62 |
| 85 | 1942 Pacific Air War Gold | MicroProse | SI | 8.61 |
| 86 | CivNet | MicroProse | ST | 8.59 |
| 87 | Chronomaster | Intracorp | AD | 8.58 |
| 88 | Destruction Derby | Psygnosis | AC | 8.57 |
| 89 | Magic Carpet 2 | Electronic Arts | AC | 8.56 |
| | Connections | Discovery Channel | CP | 8.56 |
| | The Dig | LucasArts | AD | 8.56 |
| 92 | Shannara | Legend | AD | 8.55 |
| 93 | Werewolf vs. Comanche | NovaLogic | SI | 8.50 |
| | Death Gate | Legend | AD | 8.50 |
| 95 | FX Fighter | GTE Entertainment | AC | 8.46 |
| 96 | Stonekeep | Interplay | RP | 8.44 |
| 97 | Apache | Interactive Magic | SI | 8.43 |
| | Dark Legions | SSI | AC | 8.43 |
| 99 | Lords of the Realm | Impressions | ST | 8.42 |
| 100 | Top Gun | Spectrum HoloByte | SI | 8.39 |

Games on unnumbered lines have scores equal to the line above. ★ Top game of type. Red - New Game. AD = Adventure, RP = Role Playing, SI = Simulation/Space Combat, ST = Strategy, WG = Wargame, AC = Action, SP = Sports, CP = Classic/Puzzle. Games are retired after two years and become eligible for the Hall of Fame.

What's The Deal With... Windows 95?

Sooner or later you knew I was going to mouth off about Windows 95 and share my gamer's take on things. But before we get on to the merriment I'd like to get a couple of things straight.

First of all, I could give a rat's fanny about the insane "Microsoft takes over the world" tales that pervade the 'Net these days. As far as I'm concerned there is enough real industrial villainy in the world that the shenanigans of a boy genius really don't cut it. Anybody who thinks computer software skullduggery is worth dragging on about should go hang out in Bhopal, and see what real corporate greed can do.

Second, I thought the marketing blitz last summer for Win95's release was the most ridiculous thing I had ever seen. Every time the mainstream media tell for it I couldn't help snickering. My favorite was the "Midnight Release Parties" that were thrown at goofy software stores in just about every city. Did anybody go to these things? What were they thinking? "Hey Bubba! C'mon! Get that waitress off yer lap and come over to my place. You can watch me transfer a file! Yee-hah!" I mean, c'mon, this was a bloody operating system, not the Beatles reunion album with John chiming in from the netherworld.

With those two background checks in place, I guess it's time to get on with the main event. After all, it's pretty much been a year since I've started working with this beastie, and I think I can safely say that my opinions have left the realm of the knee-jerk long ago. The bottom line is: "It seems to work OK, but it's no bloody Theory of Relativity either"—and that's really what bugs me about it. For all that hype, it should have really been something special...but guess what? It's just another damn operating system.

I admit, as a big network gaming kinda guy, I am pretty happy about the improvements over the crotchety-old-guy-in-the-attic that was Windows for Workgroups. Nowadays those network nooks, once established, are as solid as can be, and make gaming through anything Win95-compatible a real breeze. I am tickled pink over that improvement. In fact, the whole setup is completely user friendly, right up to the point something isn't working—and then all that endless "Plug'n Play" crap boils down to a help file message saying a) *Maybe your card is bugged or you didn't put it in all the way or b) Maybe you should ask somebody much smarter than you.*

The other great promise of Win95 for gamers: the end of the 640K limit and the dreaded boot disk. This is another mixed bag, from the Maxwell Smart "It was this close..." depart-

ment. Once again things have gotten easier, but at the same time they are nowhere near what they were promised to be. The very fact that the wise and courageous Loyd Case must spend each month diving through BIOSes and defining optimal boot systems is a big clue that Win95 isn't

“ Hey
Bubba! Get that
waitress off yer
lap and come
over to my
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watch me trans-
fer a file! ”

exactly the gamer's complete "friend in a box" yet. I can hear the trade reps screaming that these things aren't needed for games designed for Win95, and they're right. But who gives a fig, while the current games designed for the OS are so dubious?

Oh sure, there are a few sweet dedicated titles, the odd quirky ones from Sierra like the command cut of *Acres of the Deep*, with actual useful voice commands, or the very pretty *EARTHSLICE2*, which had far more impressive frame rates than gameplay or character, but which at least demonstrated that the next half-step in sim technology could exist quite nicely under Win95. On the other hand, I am getting pretty tired of half-baked cartridge machine rejects that need a Pentium and 16 megs, but proudly display "Compatibility" stickers.

And speaking of compatibility stickers: here's a news flash to all those folks who put on those "COMPATIBLE WITH WIN95!!!!!!" stickers, footnoted at the bottom with: "In MS-DOS mode." For all intents and purposes, that is the same bloody thing as saying it's NOT bloody compatible!

So, while Win95 is definitely a step in the right direction, and I'm sure of it, Uncle Bill deserves to make the odd buck off of it, I'd really hate to see all the backslapping media mongers go blind to the fact that Microsoft isn't quite done yet, and there's a ways to go before gaming and Windows are comfortable in the same sentence. ☹

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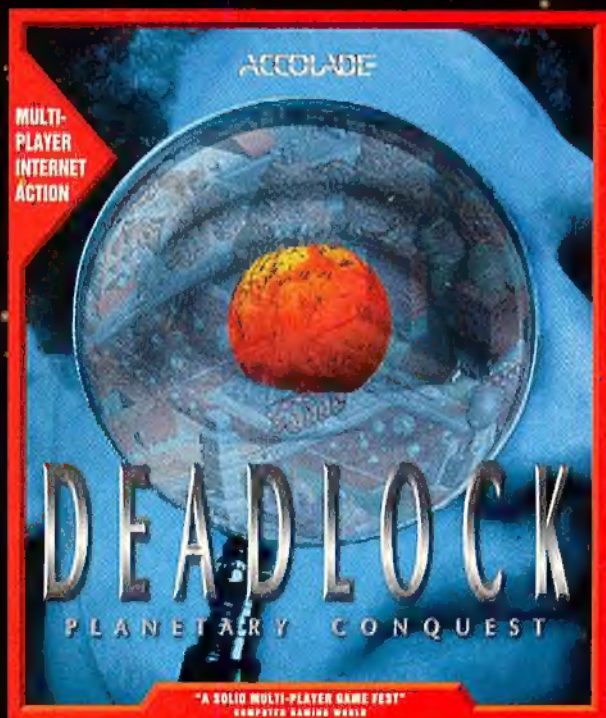
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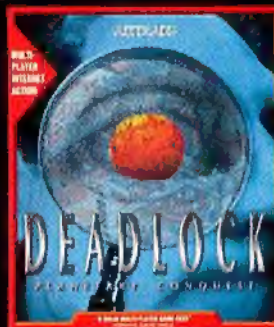
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